MERCIFUL
Unto Me-A Sinner

ELINOR DAWSON

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BY

Elinor Dawson

"*The greatest attribute of heaven is mercy.*

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PREFACE.

Man has always been granted the privilege of telling his own story no matter how shocking it may be to the refined senses. He has boldly set out with the implied assertion that if you did not want to be startled you could exercise your own right of turning from him and leaving him unread. In all of the actual experiences of life there rests a moral. To those who hold a contrary opinion I say most frankly, go no further into this record. Young women who have tried to imagine how it would seem to live in a state of lost modesty have given their views of things of which they were happily ignorant, and we have praised them for their boldness and have invited them to tea. Their guesses were entertaining. This book is not composed of shrewd surmises. It is literal rather than literary; and it may be the guilty instead of the guiltless that shall cast the first stone at me. Let the indulgent reader pursue this record to the end.

I have the right to deal openly and in most perfect frankness with myself, but I have no right to compromise others. So, therefore, I may be compelled occasionally to employ disguises where other persons are concerned. But some of the names are actual and await verification if any one should choose to take that trouble.

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Merciful Unto Me, a Sinner.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST LIGHT.

The first light that I ever beheld came through a window in a farm house in West Virginia, out among the hills not far from Wheeling. In remembrance if not in honor of an aunt I was named Elinor. The first of my recollection was the act of sitting in my father's lap by the fire. My mother, a weak little woman, was trying to take me from him, it seemed, for he was unsteady in his chair and threatened to fall with me. Without further ado I may say that my father was a drunkard. It may have been a long time after this, but it doesn't seem more than a day, when I was taken out among a large number of people, into a house, where a very tall man got up and talked a long time, and then some more men took up a long black burden and bore it away. Then I heard mourning amid the strains of a sad song. They were burying my father. After this I went back into darkness and remained a hun-

dred years, it seemed, and when again I emerged into the light it was when my mother had put a new frock on me and was admiring my beauty. It gave me a strange feeling of delight, and I looked at myself in the glass when she held me up; and in my play that day I was careful not to soil my clothes for fear that I might lose some of my attractiveness. And now as the days passed I lived not to play with other girls, but to be beautiful, reaping my enjoyment in hearing people refer to me as " such a pretty child." I had not inherited a pleasant temper, and was inclined to be cross, but when my mother told me that to make faces would spoil my beauty, I was ready to suffer in order to smile, though I might be boiling with anger. I remember a pair of drop-stitch stockings that mother bought for me, white and silken. And when the peddler who sold them was gone I put them on and sat nearly all day in the house, afraid that I might soil them if I should venture out.

At a village called West Liberty there was a boarding school, and here my education was begun. I rode a pony that was the envy of all the little girls and I was proud and happy. My hair

and eyes were so black that they nicknamed me Gypsy. At first I was resentful, but when I understood that it must mean something full of a wild sort of beauty, I was pleased. So was my mother, and it was by that name that she ever afterward addressed me. I remember that one Sunday a man whom I had seen a number of times walked home from church with mother and me. As he was helping me over the stile, where we crossed the meadow, he wanted to take me into his arms, and I objected, not because I did not like him, but for fear that he would rumple my dress; and I told him as I drew back that I was almost thirteen and that he must treat me as a young lady. Hereupon my mother scowled at me and said that I was not so old as that. She said that I wasn't more than eleven, and I thought it strange until it dawned upon me that she wanted the man to think her younger than she was. After this I noticed that she took more care of herself, although she was always fond of finery and perfumery. One day when I came home from school I saw mother and the man walking in the garden, and when they thought that no one was looking they became very " loving," walking

hand in hand. When he kissed her I laughed, and he turned about and saw me. But he wasn't frightened, and neither was my mother. She called me to her and kissed me ever so many times, and told me that the man was going to be my father. I didn't see how this could be, but as they seemed to know more about it than I did, I did not dispute with them. The man kept a store several miles away, and as I had seen some bright pieces of cloth in his place I thought it would be fortunate to have him for a father. Well, they were married, and he was a father sure enough—never was cross with me, but always told me how pretty I was; and he brought me many things to wear.

My Aunt Elinor had married an insurance man. They lived in Chicago. He died and then Aunt kept a boarding house. Many a time she wrote to me and begged me to visit her, but I couldn't very well. There was always money enough to buy finery for me, but never enough to send me away. But when I had been graduated from the school I urged mother to let me go to Chicago. She then intimated that some day I might go on a bridal tour, and this made me

laugh, for I had often told her that there was no young man in the neighborhood that I liked well enough to marry. Then she spoke of a man named Pague, a man who had something to do with coal mines and who was at least ten years older than my step-father.

"But you don't surely mean that you would like for me to marry him," I said. "Why, he is nearly old enough to be my grandfather."

"Age is nothing and sentiment is everything," she replied. "He has told me that he loves you devotedly, and he is a truthful man. Haven't I brought you up with the greatest care? Haven't I done all that I could to make you beautiful? And what is beauty worth—what object could it be if you are going to throw it away on a poor man? You marry Mr. Pague and he will take you to the World's Fair."

"But I don't like him. He chews tobacco and isn't neat, and he looks so old and wrinkled. When I marry, the man must be handsome."

She flew into a passion. When my step-father came home she told him that I didn't have any sense. He looked at her a moment and said: "Well, I guess she is pretty much as you have

made her, except that she has gone a little further than you intended. She sets a higher price on her beauty than you expected. But as for old Pague, I want to tell you, madam, that he's an old fool and as close as the bark on a tree."

In her anger she flew at him and declared that he was a brute and had poisoned my mind. She shut herself up and vowed that she would starve rather than to eat at the table with either one of us. But he was good-tempered and smiled over it all, and I felt sorry for him. He was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, had been educated for a doctor, but never having been able to make a living at the practice, had taken to a commercial life. But even in this he was not a success, for he made an assignment not long after his quarrel with mother, or rather her quarrel with him. Then he tried to run the farm, and he worked hard, but didn't know how to manage. One day old Pague called and asked to see me, and rather than to have another scene with mother I went into the parlor where he sat, twirling his skinny thumbs. It would have seemed that to me it were a matter of indifference whether or not I appeared well before him, but

I couldn't resist the temptation to give myself a few touches before the glass. When I entered the room he looked up with a yellow light in his old eyes, and told me that he had brought me a present. Then he began to unwrap something rolled in a red handkerchief, and after a while he discovered an old silver watch almost as large as a saucer. He said that it had been the property of his grandfather and that I was the only one on earth that was entitled to it. I asked him why it was that such an honor belonged to me, and he smirked and smiled and said that it was because he was in love with me and wanted me to be his wife. I was bold enough to tell him that it was not generosity that prompted him to give so valuable a piece of property to one whom he was going to marry, for in that event he could get it back again; and he laughed like the cackle of an old hen, and said that I was not only beautiful, but witty. I heard my mother clearing her throat in the hall-way, and I knew that she meant this as a threat that it would not be well for me unless I brought matters to a satisfactory conclusion.

"Gypsy," he said, "I am worth more than a hundred thousand dollars," and at this my mother

was seized with so distressful a dryness of the throat that I thought she must surely need help; so I went out to her, but with violent gestures she drove me back. Old Pague repeated the assertion that he was worth one hundred thousand dollars, and waited for me to announce my surprise, but I said nothing. "That much money will always keep you from want," he said.

"Yes, if I had it," said I.

"Be my wife and you shall have it."

I wanted the money. I was mean enough to say to myself that he could not live a great while longer and that then I could travel and finally marry to please myself. I had been called warm and passionate. But now I was cold and calculating. And I was just about to ask him if he would settle that amount on me when my stepfather called me. He was not in the hall-way, but in the yard close to the house. I went out to him. "No matter what that old wretch swears to, don't believe it," he said. "There is a trick in everything he does. He can outwit the shrewdest lawyer in the county."

My mother came walking out toward us. She was fuming with wrath and struggling to subdue

her voice so as not to be overheard by old Pague, she said: "Samuel, you have nothing to do with this affair. This is my daughter and she shall do as—I please."

"Why not let her do in this matter as she pleases?" he replied.

"That, sir, is not to be considered. She is my daughter."

"But is she old enough to marry? Remember that she wasn't but a little more than eleven when you and I were married."

"It makes no difference what she was then, she is past seventeen now. Gypsy, go into the house and tell Mr. Pague to settle that one hundred thousand on you."

My step-father put forth his hand as if he would detain me. "Samuel," said my mother, "if you try to keep her back, that ends it between you and me. You may take the nothing that you brought with you and go—whenever you feel disposed to counsel my daughter to disobey me."

My step-father turned about and walked off and I went back into the house. Old Pague was twirling his thumbs. "Are you quite sure that

you will settle that amount of money on me?" I asked.

"Just as sure as I live."

"Without any trickery?" I inquired.

He laughed and said that where any one loved as deeply as he did there could be no trickery. "Before the ceremony is performed I will sign over to you property to the amount of one hundred thousand dollars," said he; and I heard the creaking of mother's shoes and I knew that she was in the hall-way, listening.

"Will you give me a few days to think over it?" I asked, and he nodded his frosted head and replied:

"Yes, until a week from to-day—next Wednesday."

He arose and wished to seal the understanding with a kiss, but I drew back from him, and in my heart there arose a rebellion, a revulsion such as I had never felt before. We are all of us born with the instinct of love's passion. In the imagined kiss the lips are ever warm. But here was snow, and I shuddered. "How can you wish to marry me when you know that it is for the money that I agree, if I ever do agree?" I said; and he

replied: "You will learn to love me when you find how warm my heart is."

An old brain may be wise, but an old heart is the home of silliness. He took his leave of me, and when he was clear of the house mother took me into her arms and kissed me and called me a good girl. There is one human being that can be weaker than an old man—a vain mother.

CHAPTER II.

EVERYTHING ARRANGED.

The life which is to come begins with the life which was. I enter into details not as an excuse of the folly which is to come, but to show, as no doubt it often has been shown, that the cradle hand must have been weak or strong. I believe in heredity, but heredity is in the hands of training and is subservient. Some of the children of error, left upon doorsteps, have turned out to be the strongest of men and women. This life is shaped by a mother's weakness or a mother's strength. By mother I mean the one who may not have given us life in the beginning, but the one whose character forms ours. My mother was a weak woman. She was cursed with beauty. To her a dimple was of more value than an idea. There was no idea except the idea of looks. I remember that long after her second marriage she wore shoes that were too small for her. Her desire was to please the eye—to make it envious,

and in this lay her happiness. Her mind shaped my own.

But I could not agree to marry old Pague. On the following Wednesday night he came to our house. It was in early March and sleet was driving sharp against the window panes. All day I had been expecting him, and all day I had been wavering. Along about five o'clock in the evening a negro boy came with a note from him, telling me that he had been detained by business, but that he would surely come before eight o'clock. Mother had been anxious and her spirits had drooped. Samuel had remained in his garret room engaged in some sort of carpenter work. I could hear him shoving his plane, and I fancied that I heard the shavings slowly falling on the floor. When the note came from Pague mother was greatly relieved. She insisted upon dressing my hair, and I sat before the fire while she tenderly plied the brush and comb. I looked up into her face and saw that she was happy. I had led her to believe that I would accept the old mummy.

"Mother," I said, "I was thinking if you wouldn't be just as happy if you knew that for one hundred thousand dollars I was to be buried

away over yonder in that old field where my father sleeps."

She put her cheek against mine. How little of strength, how wanting in character affection may be! How brightly may shine a selfish love. "Gypsy, how can you talk that way when I love you so?" she said. "You know that your happiness is the aim of my life. How can you talk that way?"

"But you aren't consulting *my* happiness. I would like to love the man I marry."

"Bah," she said, letting the brush fall on the floor. She stooped to get it and I waited for her to say more, not that I expected it to be of interest, but I waited from habit. "Love on the part of a man is a matter of a few months," she said; and I heard Samuel slowly shoving his plane. "A man is an animal," she went on, "and he loves just as an animal does."

"But doesn't a woman love that way, too?" I inquired, glancing up into her face.

"Some women, perhaps," she said.

"Mother, what is virtue—on the part of a woman?"

"Now, Gypsy, don't be foolish."

"But I want to know."

"Well, don't you know?"

"How should I know? Who has ever taught me? If beauty is everything, why then to satisfy the demands of beauty is virtue, isn't it?"

"You don't know what you're talking about."

"But mother, I *want* to know what I'm talking about. What is virtue?"

"It is marrying some one and—behaving yourself."

"How behaving? Staying at home while your husband is away—drunk?"

"Now, Gypsy, who said anything about drunk?"

"But my father was a drunkard. And were you virtuous?"

She dropped both the brush and the comb. She did not stoop to recover them, and I took them off the floor and handed them to her. She thought me silly, but I was striving to be wise. After a time she spoke again.

"No one can say anything against my character," she said.

"But what do you understand as character? It surely isn't marrying an old man for his money.

You say that a man loves like an animal. Perhaps I do, too. We don't love with our minds, but with our hearts—our bodies. And if we love one, in that way, it must be virtue. If I give myself to a man whom I do not love, that cannot be virtue—not as virtuous as the animals."

"I see that Samuel has been talking to you—and you have been reading those good-for-nothing books. Such trash is the ruination of a girl's mind."

"But the books I have been reading were written by women."

"Ugly women," said mother. She leaned over me and laughed. Ah, what a contempt she had for plainness. How she sighed over her misfortunes—which were that she had married poor men both times. She condemned me for reading books written by ugly women. She found her greatest pleasure in looking at the fashion plates of the worn magazines that lay about the house.

"He will soon be here," she said as she finished her work and stood off to admire me. "Ah, think what a great thing it will be to have one hundred thousand dollars and to travel; and after a while—"

"When he is dead," I put in.

"Yes, when he is dead," she said without the slightest embarrassment, "you and I will go abroad and see some of the grand things of this earth. I wonder if that clock is right. Nearly eight. He ought to be here soon. Hush, I think I hear his horse."

It was his horse. Mother opened the door and stood there, holding the lamp. Mr. Pague came in, stamping his feet. He smiled upon me, as he and I followed mother, who walked on into the parlor, carrying the light. In the parlor the fire had begun to burn well, and the room was cheerful, with the sleet still cutting at the windows. Mother lighted the hanging lamp and went out, carrying the hand lamp with her; and I "heard" her standing in the hall-way; she did not seem to move or to make any noise, but I *heard* her in her silence, and I knew that she was waiting for the words of encouragement. Pague warmed himself before the fire, turning his great feet this way and that; he rubbed his hands and declared that it was a bad night on dumb cattle. I could hear mother in her silence, standing in the hall.

She had put out her lamp, or had taken it into the sitting room and returned.

"Well," said Pague, and then I heard mother's shoes creak. She was moving closer to the door. I waited, but after saying "well" Pague was silent, looking at me as if he expected me to finish the sentence for him.

"I have thought over your proposition," said I.

He thanked me and warmed his hands by the fire. "And what have you decided?"

"That I will marry you."

"I thank you. Oh, you are sensible as well as beautiful. How soon?"

"As soon as you feel disposed to settle the property on me."

"That can be done at once," he said, smiling. "Would you like to live in Wheeling?"

I told him that I should prefer to live there unless he might desire some larger city. He said that it did not make so much difference where he lived, so long as he lived with me. "Silence" ceased to come in from the hall-way and I knew that mother had gone happy to her room. He talked a long time and I thought that he never would go. He told me about his business affairs,

and though he intended that I should think him broad, yet I could not help but see him narrow and mean. When at last he arose to go he said that if I did not feel disposed to enter into the business arrangements, that part of our "love affair" could be transacted by my mother. I knew well that she would see to it and in this arrangement I felt perfectly safe. Again he wanted to kiss me, but I simply could not let him touch my lips with his corn husks, and I drew away from him, but he came near as I was bidding him good night at the door and put his arm about me, and I shuddered. But I was determined to keep my part of the contract. Mother had been waiting for him to go, and when he was gone, she flew to me and wept over me. I heard Samuel coming down the stairs. He came into the sitting room and sat down, looking tired; and after a time he asked me if everything had been settled. I looked toward mother and Samuel nodded his head, knowing that the contract was as good as signed.

"When is it to be?" he inquired, and I looked at mother.

"What is the use of putting it off?" she said.

"None that I can see," said Samuel. "When

we have decided to commit suicide, why, the sooner the better."

"Fortunately, you have nothing to do with these arrangements," said mother; and after he had sat for a time in silence, he said to mother: "And you are going to live with her, I suppose."

"Live with her? What do you mean?"

"I mean that you surely don't care to live here alone."

"Still I don't understand you."

"I mean that as soon as she marries that old fool I'll leave this house, never to return."

She looked at him with no love in her eyes and he sat there in silence, waiting for me to say something, I supposed. But now I saw myself by so wretched a light that I didn't know what to say. I didn't say anything. I went to my room, leaving them to sit there and stare at each other. But when I came down the next morning they both seemed to be in good humor. That day mother went with Pague to the court house and when she returned she said that everything had been arranged.

CHAPTER III.

CONGRATULATED HER.

Among my girl friends was Olive Peyton. We were nearly of the same age, and at school we had been classmates. In style we were directly opposite, and this was perhaps the reason that we were so close in friendship. She was redheaded and blue-eyed, lively and of a sweet disposition. But she, too, had been brought up to believe that all of a woman's charm and especially all of her power in this life centered in her looks. She was just miserable enough at home to be happy in talking about it when she was away. Her mother had been my mother's rival for the "belleship" of the county, and it was too much to expect that they could ever be friends. But there was never any objection raised against the intimacy that existed between Olive and me. And so, when my marriage had been settled upon I hastened over to tell her. The Peytons lived in an old brick house, red amid the green cedars. Before the

war it had been quite a lordly place, and there were negro cabins in the yard. Peyton was a tobacco buyer and was sometimes away from home, and I wished that he was on this occasion, and such proved to be the case. He had a way of looking at me that I didn't quite understand. But he must have liked me, for I remember that once he said that if his wife should die he would choose me as her successor. He was joking, of course, but he looked at me in a queer way. Olive told me that there had been a scandal in her father's life, and that her mother had never quite forgiven him. You may think that it was a bad state of affairs for so quiet a country neighborhood, and perhaps it was. I am simply giving the facts as I remember them—writing the one book which they say is the inheritance of every man and especially of every woman.

From her window Olive saw me coming and ran out to meet me. She had something to tell me about a young man that was of late coming to see her. The parents objected to him and this sweetened the affair. The young people had established a postoffice in a hollow tree. They wrote to each other several times a day. Olive had just

received a letter, and what made it more interesting, her mother suspected that she had it. The young man was said to be wild. That was delicious. He had been drunk in the village, and this gave Olive something to think about and to grieve over in the evening when the bats were flying through the dun air. We kissed each other, and how warm and soft were her lips. I thought of old Pague's corn husks. In her room we had talked over her postoffice, and she had read me her letter before I told her of my approaching marriage. No matter how I turned it about or mused over it I couldn't make it romantic, and I found embarrassment in getting down to it.

"And now, dear," she said, "what have you got to tell me?"

She knew that something was on my mind. I must have shown it. I told her finally, and she hugged me or rather hugged at me, for she knew old Pague and couldn't work up much enthusiasm.

"But are you really going to marry him?" she asked.

"Why, yes; it has been settled, don't you know?"

"I know, dear, but such things are never settled—until they are; and then it is too late. Your mother ought to be ashamed of herself."

We often talked about our mothers, and as I look back now I can't help feeling that we had a cause, although it must have been wrong. What a difference a real woman would have made in our lives.

"Yes, I know she ought," I replied.

"She is going to sell you just as our grandfathers did their negroes."

"Yes, just the same."

"Except that you give your consent," said Olive.

"Yes, to keep from having trouble. But no matter what I do there will be trouble. Father threatens to leave home and never to come back if I marry the old fool."

"Gypsy," she said, "why don't you run away?"

"Why, what have I to run with, and where have I to run to?"

"But I'd die before I'd marry that old wretch," she said. "Why, he's disgusting."

"Yes, I know that. But he might not live long."

She was beautiful and she was heartless in a way. Man was our natural prey. In some vague sort of fashion we had a notion of motherhood. In health and in full blood we knew the meaning of love, even if it were as animals knew it, but honor was lacking. I say it to my shame, but I did not know the real meaning of the word honor. I knew that honesty meant not to steal, but I did not know that to sell myself, even though the sale were attended by a ceremony, was just as much of a fall from virtue as it would have been for bread without the ceremony. If ceremony makes virtue, then God help us. The women whom I knew were not happy with their husbands. Was marriage really a failure? If so, one failure was as bad as another, and an old failure might be no worse than one of a younger brand. These thoughts dragged through my mind as I talked to Olive. And yet, so far as either of us knew, we were pure. But real purity does not mean bodily cleanliness only. It means

cleanliness of mind, nobility of thought; but of this we knew nothing. The guiding hand of virtue had not trained our lives. You may think that I am preaching. But wait before pronouncing judgment and see if I have not a cause. This book is written for mothers, as well as for girls.

Olive was not shocked when I said that the old man might not live long. Between our two souls there could be no disguise. So, why attempt it?"

"He might not live long, and yet too long," she said. "You remember our classmate." She mentioned the name of a girl whom we both had loved. "She married an old man who was thought to be rich. He died in debt and left her with three children." This set me to thinking. In a way we were innocent, but not wholly ignorant.

"Horrible," I said. "But what am I to do?"

"Marry some one of the boys."

"There is not one that is worth picking up out of the road."

She knew that this was almost true. The young men as they grew up went away to the West, those who were anything to speak of; and

besides there was no romance about a fellow who had all his life lived in one place. Olive's young man had come from old Virginia and this alone freed him from the charge of unprogressive dullness. But the others were progressively dull. They became duller as the days passed, and to think of marrying one of them was simply out of all sensible question.

We heard Olive's mother coming up the stairs and changed the subject. Mrs. Peyton asked after my mother and wondered why she had not been over to see her, and finally she asked me if it were true that Mr. Pague was coming to see me. Then, without further ado, I told her my story and she smiled upon me and said that it was a good match. "He is a very rich man, my dear," she said, "and I am glad that your mother had the good sense to insist. I have been a girl myself, and I know that girls don't know what's good for them."

"But wasn't there such a thing as sentiment when you were a girl?" I inquired, and she looked surprised. "Sentiment! Why, of course, and there's sentiment now. Didn't you just tell

me that you were going to be married? And what is that but sentiment?"

"But is it sentiment if I don't love him?"

"Love him!" And now she was more astonished than before. "How could it be possible that you should not love him when he is to settle a hundred thousand dollars on you? Now look around this neighborhood at the different women and you will find that all of them married for what they thought was love. And what did it amount to? Nothing—worry and hard work. The sort of love that you are thinking about is a disease. Let it alone and it cures itself, but attempt to cure it with marriage, and misery is almost certain to follow. I don't believe there ever was a girl who refused to marry a rich man that didn't at some time regret it. The love that the poor man gives does not compensate. And your love for him means slavery. Why is it that all of the women who married for old fashioned love want their daughters to marry rich; where is the father that wants his son to marry a poor girl? He actually questions the respectability of the poor girl. If it were Olive I would see that she married him, I can tell you that."

"Well, I just wouldn't," Olive spoke up.

Mrs. Peyton turned to me and said: "Don't let what she says have any weight with you. You marry Mr. Pague and amount to something."

There seemed to be no way out of it, and I went home in a depressed state of mind. My mother asked me what Mrs. Peyton had said, and when I had told her she remarked: "She's got more sense than I thought she had."

On the following Sunday Pague came to our house and it seemed that he would never go away again. He talked about coal mines and labor troubles and hard times, but would occasionally brighten up with the remark that I should never want for anything. This led me to believe that he was not sure of his fortune, and when he was gone I spoke to mother about it, but she laughed in a cunning way and said that she was sure of his wealth.

The days passed and they were making my wedding clothes. The girls of the neighborhood made no secret of their sympathy for me, but the married women were always ready with their congratulations. One day while mother was busy with a dressmaker, Samuel found an opportunity

to talk to me. She kept a close watch on him, never permitting us to be alone; but on this occasion she was taken off her guard. The weather had turned warm and we were out in the yard. "And you are really going to marry him, Gypsy?" he said.

"I don't see any way out of it," I replied.

"But there is a way out of it. When your clothes are done, take them and steal away to your aunt in Chicago."

His words sent a thrill through me. "You would be simply taking what belongs to you," he said. "You have your aunt's address. You want to visit the Fair, and you can remain in Chicago during the entire time. Your mother is insane on the subject of money. She would have you believe that all other women are the same way, but it is not true. There are millions of women who would not sell themselves to save their lives. I will give you enough to pay your fare to Chicago."

I think that it might have been easy enough to dismiss his words had not Pague come to see me that night. His very presence was an outrage upon my modesty. He tried to be senti-

mental and was silly. It was said that his wife had worked herself to death, and I asked him about her; and he said that she was an ignorant though a good woman and had never been a companion to him. I wondered why he spoke of her ignorance, since his own mind had been so dwarfed; but I have since then noticed that if a man has saved his money, when even in doing so he may have denied himself the necessities of life, he thinks that it was an intelligence or some superiority of mind that did it. Pague wanted me to go to church with him that night, and as my mother insisted, I went. The minister preached on love; said that God was love, and after the sermon congratulated me on my approaching marriage. Everybody knew of it, and I blushed until it seemed that I had no more modesty left to burn up. The church was not far from our house and we walked, mother behind us, happy, too, I felt, for occasionally she would break forth into song. Ah, some hearts can sing over a coffin if there were gold in it. She left us standing at the gate—hurried into the house as if to give Pague an opportunity to kiss me; and he tried to, but I was not yet quite ready to

surrender all sense of shame. But I suffered him to put his arm about me, and he pressed me up close to him, and it was the disgust of this moment that determined me to act upon the advice given by Samuel.

But how was I to get my trunk away from the house? It was easy enough to go into Wheeling, on a pretense of wanting to buy something, but that was a settlement of only a part of the difficulty. I found occasion to speak to Samuel, and his expression was that he was "up a stump." But fortune or misfortune favored me. Mother was called over to visit a woman who was not expected to live, and this was my opportunity. Samuel engaged a negro with an express wagon and I left home about noon-time. That night I slept on a train bound for the West.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER OLD MAN.

Aunt Elinor was my father's sister. Her letters to me had always been kind, and I knew that she wanted me to visit her, for she had repeatedly urged me to come, but I could not settle in my mind as to how she would receive me now, a rebel and a runaway; but I knew that she must applaud me when she knew that I had too much sentiment to sell myself to a disgusting old man. I had never been more than a few miles from home, and now to be rushing alone toward a world new and dangerous was full of a most delicious adventure. The thought of going for the first time into a great city had no terror for me, such as in books had been pictured in the minds of defenseless maidens. It was somewhat of a call upon modesty to go to bed in a sleeping car, and I lay down with all my clothes on. I was stared at by men and rather haughtily gazed at by women,

but this was a part of my education and caused me no uneasiness.

Aunt Elinor's boarding house was in Ellis avenue, not far from the World's Fair grounds. And just before reaching Chicago I gave my brass check to an omnibus man and bought a ticket that entitled me to a ride in his conveyance. The month was June and the weather seemed raw to me. I hardly know what my impressions were as I was driven through the streets. I had a dread of being thought from the country and I was afraid to look about me. An old lady in the 'bus asked me if I expected to remain long in the city, and I told her that I was just returning home from boarding school, that I lived in Chicago. So I entered the town with a lie.

As I had not informed Aunt Elinor of my intention to come so soon, she was taken completely by surprise. She gave me a real welcome, but this was not of nearly so much moment as the look of surprise with which she regarded me. I knew that she was struck with my appearance, and with a woman, even among women, this is always the first victory. She said that she was so sorry that my mother had not come with me,

and I knew that she was glad. It was about noon-time when I arrived, and soon, at the table, I was introduced to a number of people. It was a pleasure whenever my aunt emphasized the fact that I was her only niece. I told her that many of the people in our neighborhood said that I resembled her when she was of my age. She said that she thought herself that a resemblance could be traced. Her eyes were blue and mine black.

A chilling rain fell during the afternoon; and so, instead of going at once to the Fair, which I longed to do, I was forced to remain within doors. The house was rather old fashioned and there was a grate in my room. My aunt sat with me and talked for a long time, mainly about her troubles. She had thought that her husband was rich, but he had died poor, leaving her to shift for herself. I remarked that she seemed to be shifting well, and she sighed and said that years ago she could have married a man of unquestioned fortune. And thus came my opportunity to tell her what I had done. I expected her to take me into her arms and commend me for my bravery, but she didn't; she said that I had un-

doubtedly thrown away a fine chance to be something in the world.

"But how could I be anything as the wife of that old man?"

She looked at me as if she pitied my ignorance. "Old men don't live always," she said. And so there it was again, speculating upon death. She said that I could have come on my bridal tour and remained during the entire time of the Fair. I wondered if this were an insinuation that I could not remain long at her house.

That night I wrote to my mother and as nearly as I could, tearfully begged her forgiveness. Just before I had sealed the letter Aunt came into the room, and, knowing what I was about, requested me to add a few lines for her. I did so, and they were not complimentary to my judgment in leaving home. "And this is not all you ought to write," she said. "Take my advice and write to Mr. Pague and request him to meet you here, at my house." I begged her hard to exempt me from this sore task, and as she was not wholly devoid of heart, she consented. But she would not give in that I was right. "It is a girl's duty to herself to make the most of her beauty," she

said, gazing into the fire as if she were viewing the ashes of a lost opportunity. "If nature has made her attractive it was for a purpose. If a girl is willing to give her youth and her beauty in exchange for money, there is no robbery."

"Except perhaps to herself," I said.

"Herself!" she emphasized. "My dear, beauty has always been marketable. Men know this—they expect it. Haven't we the example of the very best society? Don't rich girls buy titles? Don't they give their money and their physical charms to decrepit old dukes?"

"Then there is no such thing as virtue," said I.

"Without money? Very little," she replied, without a ruffle of countenance. "What you know as virtue lives in romances and on the stage. It lives until the book is closed or until the curtain is rung down on the last act. Take this big town, supposed to be the very center of American democracy. And what do you find? Nine-tenths of the mothers hunting money for their daughters. Oh, neither age nor disease cuts any figure. If a girl marries for money she has made a good match. Her friends never think of condemning her. They know that she has done well.

But let her marry poor and they pity her. Take the newspapers. What do you find? The pictures of girls who have been bought."

"But why shouldn't I agree to sell myself for a certain length of time?" said I, and then I added: "If the whole world has agreed to prostitution, why not be more virtuous than the rest of mankind and agree to live with a man, say for five or ten months. I have read that society was bad, but I couldn't conceive that it was wholly diseased. I am not more romantic than the most of young women. In fact, I am hardly romantic at all. I am possessed of plain, common sense, and I am constantly called upon to put it aside and acknowledge myself a legitimate prey of man. It seems that the world has gone sex mad. Even at school we were not exactly taught that money was everything, but in a way we were constantly shown that it was. And the highest province of money is to buy bodies and to permit the souls to wander astray."

I had signed my letters Gypsy when I wrote to my Aunt, thoughtlessly at first, and, although I was named for her she rather liked the nickname, it fitted so well; and she said to me:

" Gypsy, I don't think that what reading you have done has been of the best. You have hunted for opinions when you ought to have sought cultivation. Men don't want women with opinions. I know that my opinions have hurt me. Oh, before I forget it, let me tell you about the Judge I introduced you to. He is from Iowa and is a widower, and is worth all kinds of money."

I knew that she had set her cap for him and had failed. I waited for her to proceed. " I saw him looking at you and I know that you could win him."

" Do you mean the old gentleman with gray beard and a bald head? "

" Well, his beard is not black, and he hasn't any too much hair. Yes, that's the one I mean. His daughter was here last week. She is going to marry a rich lumberman in Michigan."

" An old man? "

" Well, yes, rather, a widower. The Judge has retired from the bench and is devoting himself to the enjoyment of life. His health is not very good." She looked at me as she said this, as if it were a great encouragement to me.

The next day was bright with the sun and the

air was warm. At the breakfast table the Judge devoted himself to me. He said that he would like the honor of giving me my first view of the Fair, and I consented to go with him. He was exceedingly polite and well-bred; was not learned enough to be a bore, and though he talked about himself the most of the time, yet what he said was rather interesting. We took a carriage to the Fair grounds. And now for the first time I had a glimpse of the great world that had always lain so far beyond my vision. It was a dazzle and a bewilderment, refinement and art yielding to the power of money. After all, my broad-minded aunt and my narrow-minded mother were both of them right. Money was the world—life; and without it there could be nothing. It was the first time that I had heard any real music, and my blood danced like sunlight on the water and my heart fluttered in its efforts to arise and fly away. In a gondola I sat with the Judge, and as we skimmed the lagoon, this swallow from Venice, he talked incessantly, but I heard him not, only his mumble, not his words; and when came the time to go to luncheon, it was a rude shock to me thus again to step upon the earth where

money was king, crowned every day and every night. After luncheon we went up that strange thoroughfare of all nations and of all thievery, the Midway, and I felt that I had crossed the sea and was living in a rude age of the world. Sometimes I felt the blush-waves flowing over me, at the sight of Turkish girls dancing, and I was ashamed to look at the Judge; but he was not ashamed, for he asked me how I liked them, and when I replied that I thought them disgusting, he remarked that he thought so too. Several times during the afternoon he referred to them, and laughingly asked me if I desired to see them again, and when most emphatically I told him no, he said that he didn't either.

That night at home there was music in the parlor, and the Judge sent out and bought champagne, the first I had ever seen. When they told me that it was wine I refused to drink of it, but my aunt emphasized the word champagne, and said that all society people drank it. Then I took a glass and drank, and bright thoughts seemed to fly through my mind, but I did not try to put them into words. The Fair arose a beautiful and most vivid picture. I went to bed happy, for it

seemed that the future was all of it as bright as the picture of the Fair. I didn't know why it should be bright, for I realized that I had no prospects; but every one was happy, and in the midst of happiness the world has always smiled. Upon awaking the pictures were gone, but it was a pleasure to muse over them, and I got up without any ill feeling, for the truth is that I had drunk but little, and even that was under the approving supervision of my aunt. She would not have permitted me to drink too much. I went again to the Fair with the Judge that day and skimmed in the gondola, but I refused to see the Turkish girls. At noon-time we went to a place called the Cafe Mariene, where hundreds of people were drinking everything save water; and the Judge insisted upon buying champagne, but I refused to drink of it. He called me a charming little Puritan. My talk must have been very silly, for, remembering what my aunt had said, that men did not like women with opinions, I had refrained from expressing my views of life. The Judge carried a gold-headed cane, with his name engraved on the top, a present, he said, from the bar when he retired from the bench; and once

he asked me to carry it for him, just as a joke, he declared, but I knew he wanted to prove to me that he could walk without it. There were several young men boarding at my aunt's house, together with a number of young women, and I felt that I should like to see the Fair with them, but aunt said that all of the girls were trying to catch the Judge, and this stimulated me into a desire to be with him. I wondered, however, why it was that a man given to such unimportant talk could ever have been a judge. He liked to go about the Iowa building, where people spoke to him and called him Judge, and it was here that we sat in the evening, looking out over the lake as the shadows began to lie closer down upon the pleated water. He asked me to tell him about my home, and I told him many things that were not true, that a count who had come into our neighborhood had vowed his love for me, and that I had come away to be freed from his importunities. He said that I had acted with great good sense, "for," said he, "those foreigners don't know how to treat a woman. Whenever an American girl marries a nobleman she must reconcile herself to slavery. It is much better to

marry some man of mature years at home—some man that has been married before. A man nearly always values his second wife more than he does the first one. Don't you think so?"

I told him that as I was not possessed of experience of such matters, I was hardly entitled to speak, and he said that my discretion was worthy of commendation. "You are a remarkably bright young woman," he declared, and I wondered how he had found it out, as he had given me no opportunity to pass judgment, except upon the most trivial of matters. There were to be fireworks that night, and I asked him if he were not afraid to remain out in the chilly air, and he scoffed at the idea and said that he was tougher than a pine knot. Several persons who had been sitting near us got up and went away, and then the Judge assumed a tone of more confidence, as if he would tell me some of his secrets. He did. He said that he had married very young and that he had never been in love with his wife. "She was a good, honest woman," he admitted, "but was never a companion to me. With her I could not have found this pleasure, sitting as

you and I are, gazing out over this enchanting scene. It would not have appealed to her."

I didn't know what to say, so I ventured to ask him if she were an educated woman, and he replied that her education was perhaps all that could be desired, but that it was not education alone that made a companion of a woman. Her mind might be cultivated and still she might be lacking in soul. "I think you have a great soul," he said. "It looks out of your eyes, restless and beautiful, as if it longed to escape and to fly away to its more fitting home—beyond this earth. You have a yearning. Tell me what it is?"

"It has not developed into an identification of itself," I said, hardly knowing what I was going to say, and realizing that I had said something foolish, but he expressed great admiration for my answer, and declared that none but a great soul could frame such a speech. "But don't you know what you long for?" he asked, and in the light of a lamp that had just sprung up I could see his eyes bent upon me. "Every heart ought to know what it yearns for."

"Yes, that is true," I replied. "But there are times or rather a time when the heart hasn't be-

come acquainted with itself. We may have a million wishes and yet no great aim."

"Hah, you talk like one who has thought," he said. "Very unusual."

"Unusual for one to think?"

"Yes, for one—so beautiful. I beg your pardon, but——"

I laughed and told him that he had committed no offense. And he seemed disappointed that he hadn't. Doubtless he desired that I should protest. I waited for him to speak, now for the first time really interested in what he might say. "But the woman who thinks should no longer be a surprise to man, since she is now educated to think, if not for herself, yet in accordance with the mannish views of other women. However, we are wandering away from the subject. All women, as all men, have ambitions, greater or less as the case may be. One woman may wish to be a leader in society and——"

"That would please me," I broke in.

"But have you no higher ambition? That is the ambition of the lighter fancy. Have you no ambition of the soul?"

"Yes," I replied, "I should like to love a man

and be loved—loved as much as I desire to be loved, which I'm afraid can never be. It doesn't seem to me that any man could love as much as I should want to be loved."

"Those could be no other than the words of a pure heart," he said. "But do you think that a young man could love you as devotedly as an old man?"

"Why not? Isn't youth the mother and the father of love? Must a man wait until his forces are nearly ebbed away before he can love? Does nature make so foolish and unreasonable a demand of herself?"

"You are surely a remarkable young woman," he said. "I thought at first that you were simply pretty, but now I find that you think. And those who think, think quickly, so now I must tell you what is in my mind and what has lodged there ever since I saw you. I aspire to the honor of offering you my—myself and all that it implies."

It was of no use to tell him that it was sudden, for it was not; I had seen it coming, had heard it in the gathering tenderness of his voice. It would have been worse than rude to laugh, and besides I did not feel so disposed. But it was

odd, that I had fled from the arms of one old man to the arms of another equally old. But one of them was old and disgusting. This one was old and refined, a gentleman, and therefore my sympathy was moved. I replied that he had honored me rather than himself, but that I could not marry him. Then he said a very foolish thing. He asked me why. " Because," I said, and I was impelled by the spirit of truth, " I could not be true to you."

" Not true to me!" he gasped.

" No, for the moment I felt that I had sold myself there would be no honor left in my soul, and I am sure that I should at some time fall in love and—fall."

He took out his handkerchief and folding it slowly pressed it to his forehead. I asked him if his head ached, and he answered no, that it was his heart. At this I could not help smiling. " There are precocious children," he said, " but it is rare that we can apply the term to a woman. But do you mean, that regardless of all moral obligation that you would——"

" Give myself to a man if I loved him," I said, when for a moment he had hesitated.

"If you were held by the bonds of marriage?"

"I would give myself all the quicker if I had to break bonds that were unnatural."

"Then if you were to marry me and should afterward meet a man whom you loved——"

"As animals love," I unblushingly suggested. He was silent for a few moments, and then he said: "Yes, as animals love, you would give yourself to him."

"Yes, for I could not restrain myself."

And now it was a long time before he spoke. "And you call yourself a virtuous woman."

"I don't know whether I am or not. My own mother couldn't tell me what virtue is. And even you are counseling me to defy it—to sell myself to you. All I hear about is money, money. Money is a disease, and has become epidemic in the human heart. Whenever I dream of love, I hear the ring of money. I ask to be told what virtue is, and they talk to me about money. I have read of divine passion. It has turned to avarice. They are shooting off the rockets. Shall we go?"

CHAPTER V.

THE "WISDOM" OF A WOMAN.

We did not remain very long. The Judge seemed to have lost his inspiration and was feeble; and as for myself, I was simply a country girl, eyes and ears, looking at the fire and listening to the music in the air. Just before we reached home—and he had insisted upon walking to the grounds to prove, perhaps, that he was strong—he asked me if I had nothing to say to him. I answered that I had been talking during the entire evening and couldn't very well think of anything else.

"I mean," said he, "on the subject—that so engaged us at one time. Were you earnest in all that you said?"

"I don't think I could have been more in earnest. Isn't it singular that whenever a woman says anything that sounds like the truth a man generally supposes that she doesn't mean it? Isn't that strange?"

He said that he hadn't noticed anything of the sort, and therefore was not able to say whether or not it was strange. If it were a fact, he supposed that it was strange. I was disposed to laugh, but he was serious, and he sighed as we were going up the steps.

My aunt was waiting for me and she came to my room immediately after I returned. She appeared flurried over something and I was seized with a fear that in some way Old Pague and my mother had conspired to have me taken home. It was not long, however, before my aunt relieved all fear in that direction. "Well," she said, sitting down with a sigh as if she were weary of life, "I never would have thought it."

"Thought what?" I inquired.

"That he could have been such a deceiver—that old man—that Judge. But instead of being a man of wealth, he hasn't more than enough to live on, and I forbid your going out with him again. Why, today I met a woman who lives near him out in Iowa, and she told me the truth about him."

"And who told you the falsehood?" I inquired; and she didn't know how to answer me.

"Did the Judge tell you he was rich, did some one else say so, or was it a mere notion of your own?"

"Well, now, some one told me; that's certain. And whoever it was told it for no other purpose than to deceive; and the Judge must have known by the way we all treated him that we thought him rich, and he could have set us right if he had wanted to. I don't like such underhand dealings. So, I forbid you to go out with him again."

There is nothing more ridiculous than to be serious over the absurd, and my aunt's condemnation of the Judge for permitting us to be deceived with regard to himself, was more than absurd—it was farcical. But I sobered my countenance, and told her it was not likely that he would ask me to go again. Then I told her that he had asked me to marry him, and she frowned and declared that he ought to be ashamed of himself, to seek such an advantage over a young girl. "There isn't one man in a thousand you can put any confidence in," she said. "If they don't directly deceive you they know when you are being deceived and let you remain in the dark, so it all

amounts to the same. You have made a lucky escape."

"It wasn't luck," I answered, "I had no idea of marrying him."

"Not even if he had been rich?"

"I refused him when I supposed him rich."

My aunt sighed. She said that it was very hard to understand me, I was so whimsical. She started out of the room, but faced about and, as if I had been going with the Judge in opposition to her wishes, declared that such a relationship must end from that moment. "Your mother shall never have a chance to say that I trapped you into an unsuitable match," she said, and bade me good night. Her determination was unnecessary, for the Judge left the house early the next morning, without saying good-bye; and I never saw him again.

Very soon there came a letter from my mother. I expected her to reproach me, but I was hardly prepared for the assertion that I had broken her heart. "And if you could see Mr. Pague's suffering your own hard heart would surely bleed, if it has any blood in it. I didn't think any human being, brought up by a Christian mother, could

be so cruel as to treat a gentleman as you have treated the man who loves you, and who would have laid down his life for you. And it will be just like you to meet some foolish young fellow and marry him; but I don't want you to think that you can bring him here to humiliate me with his shiftlessness and poverty."

She said nothing of my possible return home and I knew that her heart was not broken simply on account of my absence from her sight. She did not mention her husband, and I was gratified to know that his part in my escape had not been suspected. It was at this moment that the determination to take up my home in Chicago entered my mind. I had lost none of my affection for my old home, for my mother; but in the love for her was a pity for her weakness, and I could not help feeling that in some way a part of her lack of strength had entered into my own character. I told Aunt of my resolve to live in Chicago. "Well," she said, "it seems to me that you are well enough educated and surely you are handsome enough to make your way. For a good-looking girl there is always an opportunity to do well, with application in the first

place, and some little tact in the second. It won't take you long to learn stenography and typewriting, and then it will be easy enough to get a place in some office. You can imagine the rest."

I replied that I could not imagine the rest, unless she meant efficiency in my work, and she smiled upon me. "Three girls of my acquaintance, one out of this house, have married rich—their employers. Find the right sort of place and stay there."

"You mean to find some place, then, where there is a marriageable man."

The look that she gave me was too shrewd to be merely wise. "My dear," she said, "all men are more or less marriageable. The divorce courts are active."

I understood her and I burned with shame. She noticed it and said: "Of course I don't mean exactly that. But there are many widowers in business, and a good looking girl has her choice of offices when it comes to getting a position. You may think me sordid, but I have had to struggle in this heartless world until poverty is to me a positive crime. It is to everybody. Why should any one be poor? Look out on the street any

evening and you will see some wretched woman taking home the clothes that she has washed. She receives her few dimes and returns home to her miserable home. Her children, brought up on the street, are anything but tender and loving. They reproach her with their poverty. The chances are that she was a handsome girl and married—to please herself instead of her mother. She wanted love and love only, and got it. Whenever you think that I am not talking hard sense, prove my error and I'll change my tone. Suppose you marry a young man and help him make his fortune. How much of it would belong to you? Upon some pretext or other he would probably obtain a divorce and marry a young woman."

"I had no idea that life was so wretched," I replied. "It would have been better for everybody never to have lived. Your ideas not only prevail in the city, but in the country places as well."

"The fault lies with the fact that there are —women," she said. "Nature, man and all life have discriminated against her, and then she is blamed by so-called virtue because she doesn't

want to load her life down with the burden of children. Children, indeed. Let the future take care of itself. Our lives lie here about us. Why, when we take into account the misery of this life, it is a positive crime to bring a child into the world. I had one, and he disgraced me and died a drunkard while he was hardly more than a boy."

"I am most unfortunate," I said, for her words made me miserable. "It is a pity that I am a woman or that I am at all. But I had thought that woman, the mother of the race of man, was noble. They say that our grandmothers were. How could there have been so great a change in so short a time? Of course there can't be any happiness when nearly every one is preaching dissatisfaction. It seems to me that there has arisen a conspiracy against life. In the country the women try to cultivate their minds with books and literary societies; and when they come to the city they find that all of their time has been wasted. You have made me wretched."

"That hasn't been my aim, I'm sure. I am trying to put you in a way to be happy, or at least contented. Of what is the use of seeking to make

a virtuous disguise of a thing that is so perfectly plain? Everything points to money. With it you may not be happy, but without it you are sure to be miserable."

Next day I went to the Fair with some of the young people, and amid music and the gorgeous sights from all the world, I was happy. But melancholy settled upon me when I returned to the house. I could not keep down the feeling that my aunt, who showed that life with her had been a battle, had told at least a part of the truth. With all of her "wisdom," she was not cold at heart. She said that she would advance enough money to take me through one of the commercial schools, would board me, and that I could repay her whenever I found myself able. In a letter scarcely less reproachful than the first one, my mother approved of my determination. She had heard that typewriting was a good opportunity for a good-looking girl. Never a word of caution, never an admonition. Some women are so virtuous as they understand it, a physical adherence to a principle, that they think it inborn, and it ought to be, but circumstances are stronger than traits.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

Not far from our house there was a small commercial school. My aunt thought that it would be better to enter here than to pay more at one of the large establishments, and so I became a student of shorthand and typewriting. I had never found it difficult to learn anything, but after a few weeks I was surprised at my own aptitude. I think that women learn stenography easier than men, up to a certain point. It may be because those little crooked marks all of them contain a secret; and it was with a sense of prying into those secrets that urged me on. Sometimes at night my aunt would dictate to me some of her views on life, and she was always pleased with herself when I read them to her; and I remember that she said that her life would make a great book. "Yes," I said, "but the men who read it would never marry."

"And why not, pray?" she asked.

"Because they would believe that all a woman wants is money."

"Well, I guess the majority of them that do marry find that out soon enough."

There was no way to get encouragement out of her. Worry and hard work had soured all the cream of this life, and now she would have me believe that there had never been any cream for her, and that unless I made money my god there could be none for me. I knew that somewhere, doubtless within sight of our house, there was honest happiness—love; instinct and the warm blood of youth told me that life was not all a nightmare; but hope is powerless to combat with experience, for experience sits upon the corpse of hope. And so, arguments with my aunt always came to naught, leaving her, in her experience, the victor of the field. Sometimes we went to the theater, and she always laughed at plays where virtue came out triumphant in the purity of its weakness. And yet, without the proper ceremony she would not have sold herself. Why was this? Why should there be so much of virtue in a lie administered by the law?

One night, late in August, we were coming

out of the Auditorium Theater when some one, gorgeous beyond immediate recognition, flounced up to me with a "W'y, how do you do?" It was Olive, my dear friend; and she introduced me to her husband—old Pague. I wanted to scream and yet I felt that I could sink into the earth I presented my aunt and she smiled upon Olive and shook hands heartily with the old man; and he coughed and smiled, showing his new teeth. "I'm so glad to see you," said Olive. "What a lucky accident. Isn't it, dear?" The latter part of the remark was addressed to Pague, and he smiled as broadly as he could and said that it was a most fortunate incident. "I would have come to see you, dear," said Olive, and this dear was addressed to me, "but I didn't know your address, and it's so hard to find any one here. You see, we left home rather suddenly, didn't we, dear?" This dear belonged to Pague, and he acknowledged it with a smile. "Do let us go some place where we can talk," said Olive. "Some restaurant. Dear, will you please call a carriage?"

I demurred, but she insisted; aunt was more than willing, and "dear" called a carriage and we drove away. Every time Olive moved there

was the rustle of silk. "We have been here two weeks," she said. "And dear has been so awfully good to me—has bought me everything I looked at. I wrote to mamma to-day and told her how happy I am."

We went into a glittering place, and when the waiters saw Olive in her finery they came running; and Pague, who must have seen much of the world, knew how to order them about. We entered into a little room off to one side, and I heard Pague say that we wanted champagne. My aunt looked at me and drew down the corners of her mouth, which meant that she was expressing her sorrow over my lost opportunity. I asked Pague if he were well, not knowing what else to say to him, and he answered, "Never better in my life"; and Olive asked me if I didn't think he looked twenty years younger. My aunt glanced at me and I said that twenty years younger was undoubtedly the way he looked, and he gave me a pitying smile.

"Mr. Pague has just entered into some sort of a consolidation of his mines," said Olive; "and is here now combining business with pleasure. But pleasure is in the ascendent, isn't it, dear?"

"Dear" said that it was, and my aunt took a swallow of water. And what a dinner the old man ordered! One would have thought that it was his wedding feast, deferred until now; and when the wine was brought he tipped my glass with his own and laughingly said that we would drink to better acquaintance. We drank, and instantly I felt better acquainted with him. The music struck up and but for an occasional reproachful glance from my aunt I should have been happy. Olive said that she was dying to have a long talk with me, alone; and I gave her our address and she said that she would come out the next day, which was Sunday. It was an occasion to be remembered, for every one in the brilliant place seemed to be happy; and when we went out Pague insisted upon sending us home in a carriage. I declined the honor, but Pague was determined and my aunt pulled at me, and I knew that I must yield. So we got into a carriage. It was some time before my aunt said anything, but I could hear her thoughts and it was not a surprise when she said: "That is a sensible girl and you were foolish. The chances are that he is worth a million dollars. Coal

mines—gracious alive, I know what it is to pay coal bills. Gypsy, I don't blame your mother—not a bit; and I don't see how you can keep from blaming yourself. Can you?"

I said that since Mr. Pague seemed to be happy, with no scars on his heart, there was nothing with which to reproach myself; and she cleared her throat as my mother had so often done when she was irritated with me. "What he thinks or feels doesn't enter into the question," said my aunt. "You yourself are the one to be considered."

"But I don't take the trouble to consider myself. If I committed a wrong it was against myself, and this wrong is now past reckoning with, I should think."

"Come, don't talk like a school ma'rm. Be sensible—if you can." And after we had driven some distance further, she added: "If you had married that man you wouldn't now be compelled to seek employment in some office."

"But aunt, you said that such employment offered a fine opportunity."

With her lips she made that sort of noise which irritation cannot form into words. "Yes, in-

deed," she said, after a time. "But what use is there to throw away a reality for an opportunity? Tell me that."

I was compelled to say that I didn't know. Oh, I had long since learned that money was always to have the best of all arguments. She said that Pague was attractive and intelligent, a man of the world; and she was sure that he would make a kind and attentive husband. Kindness lived longer than love. Kindness sometimes arose into love, but love rarely sobered into kindness. "Oh, all of my experience hasn't come out of a cook book," she said. "I am not ignorant; I can read and I can reason."

She could talk, I knew that; and since talk has ever been taken for reason, I did not dispute her. Besides, there did seem to be reason in what she said. Her ill-humor with me never lasted long at a time, and just before we reached home she said: "But you must make the best of the next opportunity. It is no use to grieve over spilt milk."

I wanted to say that it was especially of no use to grieve over sour milk purposely thrown away, but I didn't.

Next morning there came a letter from my mother. She said that she had been ill and therefore had not written to tell me of the grand wedding over at Peyton's. The money which rightfully belonged to me had been settled on Olive, she said; and the Peyton family, including the father, who had always been ambitious for his daughter, were all of them happy.

In the afternoon Olive came in a carriage, without her husband; and I saw a look of pity in her eyes as she looked at the plain furniture in my room. I asked her what had become of the postoffice in the hollow tree, and she laughed and said, "Poor Charley. And he reformed, too, thinking that I was going to marry him. But it couldn't be. He wrote to me just before the wedding and said that he wished my husband would live a hundred years. Wasn't that kind? Charley has such a forgiving nature. Oh, did I tell you that we thought of going to Egypt this winter? Mr. Pague wants me to go up the Nile. He says it's charming. He was there several years ago and was much taken with the—the view from the boat. I heard that there was the mummy of an Egyptian princess here, and I went to see her,

upstairs over a candy store; and I looked at her and wondered if she had ever been very beautiful. I think her complexion must have been very much tanned. My, how I do go on. I'm keeping the first letter Charley wrote me after he heard of my determination to marry Mr. Pague. I told him myself and he didn't say much, but went away to write to me. It is full of the sweetest despair you ever saw. And I'm going to keep it as long as I live, and——" she turned her face from me. "Isn't it funny how we treasure such things?" she said, wiping her eyes. "And you could have had him—Mr. Pague, I mean, but then you were always my successful, or rather my superior rival—except this time. But of course you don't care now if he loves me more than he could have loved you. You never seemed to care for love, anyway. Now tell me all about yourself and what you intend to do."

I told her that I was studying in a commercial school, and she said that if Mr. Pague centered his business in Chicago he could give me employment. "But it would not be in the line of my aunt's policy for me to work for a man that is not eligible," I said.

"How eligible? Oh, I see. Well, I wish you as much luck as I've had."

When she had taken her leave I thought that she was happy, with the exception of the few tears she had shed over Charley; and they may have been happy tears. I did not talk to her seriously. There *was* nothing serious except money, and the serious part of money is that you do not possess it. When I went to bed that night I agreed that I was conquered, and I formed a resolve to have money, to be desperate if necessary, to let my heart play no part, to crush it. Usually a night resolve flies away with the morning, but this one did not; it hardened into a determination. Before going to school I told my aunt that she had conquered, that I was going to follow her advice——

"And be somebody," she broke in cheerfully. "We can't get away from the fact, my dear," she said—"the fact that women are to buy and sell, or to be bought and sold. All conditions and all nature point to that fact. A woman's love is one of twins—the other one is trouble."

I could not help admiring her, she was so strong in many ways. In France she would have

sat on a cannon with a sword in her hand. As a man, with that brow, that head shaped for strength of purpose, she would have been a statesman. Her god was power—money; and power in some form has always been the god of the great. How she despised her work; how she despised the people that were compelled to board. She knew that with money she could have been a dominating force in the women clubs. She was rising when my uncle died. But when the women learned that she was poor and must work for a living, they fell away from her. It was no wonder that she hated them. It was no wonder that in her love for me she wanted me to rule.

I returned Olive's visit, at the hotel, and I found her in handsome apartments. Old Pague was surely "blowing" himself, and his wife knew how to help him. When the dam that has held in the current of her life breaks loose, it is the country girl that knows how to spend money. She may not have read much, but the little she has read teaches her what to want.

She showed me her clothes, and the dresses that I had "stolen" from home were mean in comparison. It had been too warm to wear her

seal skin, but she put it on for me, and I must confess that envy crept into my heart. Her hats were dreams edged with visions, and it was the first time that I had ever seen a pair of shoes that cost ten dollars. But they were too large for me, and this was some comfort. She chatted all the time, as I imagined a queen might prate over new territories that had come into her possession; she ordered champagne and we drank it and hugged each other and laughed. But she began to talk about Charley, and this made her cry; but not for long, as her hats were in full view.

After a while Pague came in, trying to look spry, but very tired. He put his arms about her, as was his right if not her pleasure, and she kissed him and put her soft cheek against his ancient stubble land, his jaw; and they cooed. But I was not envious except when I looked at the hats. After a time Pague put her aside and began to fumble over some papers that looked like bills, and he winced so that I expected him to cry "Ouch."

"Is there anything wrong, dear?" she inquired.

He smiled in a colicky sort of way and said

that everything was all right, "my pet." He asked me if I had heard from my mother of late, and when I told him, he said: "She is a most remarkable woman, full of common sense. And she would have made a man of your father if—I beg your pardon—if it hadn't been for his unfortunate habits."

It was cruel of me, but I felt that if he had ever been much of a man it would have been in spite of her. It may be that some men who drink have a cause. It may be more of dissatisfaction at home than the allurements of the wineshop. Men are not made strong by the weak ambitions of a woman. A noble unselfishness is the main spring of true greatness—on the part of a wife. But I did not at this time so argue with myself, for my resolve was made. I was going to be selfish. And God knows how I carried out this determination.

I asked Pague if Samuel, mother's husband, were doing anything. "Well, nothing to amount to anything," he replied. "I think he is trying to invent some sort of a machine. In fact I know he is. He came to me not long ago and said that it would take about a thousand dollars to

put it in shape for the market. Under—well, I might say that under certain conditions I might have let him take the money."

He looked at me. Olive, with one of her hats on her head, was standing in front of the dresser, surveying herself in the glass. I nodded and slowly he shook his head. "Why are you two so silent all at once?" Olive inquired, turning around and looking first at me and then at him.

"Because, my dear," said Pague, "there is practically nothing more to say about a man when you have said that he has invented a machine."

"But you said that under certain conditions you might have let him have money. What conditions do you mean?" she asked, looking at him and then at me.

"Why, if he had been foolish enough to marry me," I spoke up.

"Yes, of course," she said, putting off her hat, going to him and putting her arms about his leathery neck. She was standing behind him, and she looked at me, her eyes smiling; but the light was not soft. At this moment she must have attributed to me a moral superiority that I did not feel.

A boy brought a card for Pague. He looked at it, and, remarking that he would be down in a moment, kissed his wife and went out. No sooner had he gone than Olive sank down upon a chair and hid her face in her hands. There was no way by which I could comfort her, and I remained silent. After a time she looked up and her eyes were red, but she was smiling. The same quality in man is called heroism.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE OFFICE.

When Pague returned he found us chatting gaily. Olive had tried on her other hat. "What a picture," he said as he looked at her, posing before the glass. Then he added: "My dear, my—our business calls us home."

"Home," she repeated, in a sad tone, and took off her hat.

"Yes, and we must go to-night."

"Is there anything wrong?" It was the money. She was afraid that it might get away. He told her no, that nothing was wrong, but that he had been sued—a trifling matter. "Then, why can't I stay here till you attend to it and come back?" she said. He drew down the corners of his mouth and looked at her. She put on her hat and posed for him. He smiled—the old fool. I took my leave of him. Olive came with me down the corridor. "I suppose people would think it strange if he went home without

me," she said. "But I wish he would. We could have such a time—with him gone. But what am I saying? The Fair will soon be over, but I'm coming back before it ends—mind if I don't."

This sounded like a threat. I told her that I hoped she would. She looked determined, almost grim; she was no longer beautiful; at such moments she was hard. The lines about her mouth looked like steel wire. But she had hats.

We stood waiting for the elevator. "Charley said that he was coming to the Fair," she said. And then she added: "Do you know what I am foolishly afraid of? That you might meet him. He has heard me speak of you. He would like to meet you to spite me."

"But why should you be interested in him now?" I inquired.

"I don't know. Oh, I'm not interested in him. It doesn't make any difference to me what he does; only if you see him don't talk to him about me. Here comes the elevator. Good bye."

She kissed me; she left a tear on my cheek—her tear.

I told my aunt of my visit, of all that had

passed. "Let her be strong and she will win," she said.

"Win what?" I inquired. I was wondering.

"What she must have to be happy—a chance to dominate over something, somebody. We are never contented except when we look down. We never do anything except when we look up. Let her look up. She has the opportunity. It does not in many cases come twice. You have had one offered to you. Make the most of the other one. You can."

I said that I would. Olive had appeared unhappy but for a few moments at a time. Afterward I knew that it was a constant struggle for her to appear even pleasant. My future was coming. My heart was dying. It was now almost sufficiently dead.

After this, at school, I worked harder than ever. The secrets in the curls, the sprawling spider legs, were the secrets of power. I was attaining speed in writing this unknown language, this warping of my own tongue. My fingers flew over the typewriter keys. The teacher saw in me great promise, that of becoming an

expert. That was an insult, but he didn't know it. He was a man—stupid.

One day my aunt and I gathered in a harvest of Sunday papers. I was looking for a position. She had given me some of her swiftest "wisdom" and I had caught it with ease. Business would not talk so fast as wisdom. The next day I went out with a purse full of newspaper cuttings. I would fill it full of gold before I halted, I said. My aunt applauded the determination. I went to a number of places. I met oldish looking girls coming out. I could have had three positions before noon-time, but they didn't suit me. The surroundings were too mean. In the afternoon I went into a large collecting agency, on the tenth floor of a new building. When I told why I had called, I was shown into a room where several girls were waiting. They were plainly dressed. I had on a part of my wedding outfit. Their talk betrayed a lack of education. One of them said that she had worked in a department store. She looked tired. One by one we were shown into another room. A man in a doorway summoned me before my time came. The others were hastened somewhat, I thought. In the room

there was a rug on the floor. The place was neat. Here I met a cheerful man, rather mature, with a bright scarcity of hair. He bade me be seated. He did not begin the conversation by asking me about my efficiency. He spoke about the weather, which he said was fine. I remarked that such days always turned my mind toward the woods. A man with no sentiment likes to hear a woman talk about the woods. He said that he was fond of the country. I wondered if he said this because he thought that I was a country girl. Some one came in and addressed him as Mr. Nevum. After a while I spoke of his advertisement. He said that he had several young women under consideration. Then I said that he might consider me, and he smiled and remarked that I ought to fill all requirements. Then he spoke of salary. The girl who had just left—went home to be married—had received more than the usual wage; she had been some time with the firm, a year, I afterward understood. I said that he might try me and if I were not worth as much as she, why, it would then be time to reduce me. He said that this was fair.

"When am I to know how you have consid-

ered me?" I asked, and he laughed because it was all so unbusiness-like. I learned before long that those who were the most unbusiness-like received the politest attention. He said that I might come early on the following morning. He was better than Pague, was not so old, but I didn't think that I could make up my mind to marry him. He was exceedingly neat and wore a diamond in his shirt. That was encouraging. It was the gleaming eye of power—my aunt's sort of power; and I wondered how much it was worth. I was delighted to know that my heart was dead.

My aunt's strong mind was not very much pleased when I told her of the manner in which my arrangement for work had been brought about. She said that I should have been more dignified. "But I was as dignified as he would let me be," I replied. "I could not have gone in with a business air, never having had any experience; and all I could do was to act as occasion prompted."

"I am afraid, however, that you were too frivolous," she said. "No matter how much a busi-

ness man may admire beauty, he doesn't wish to marry a frivolous girl if he can help it."

This made me laugh, but I soon perceived that she was in earnest, that it was a part of her wisdom.

"But I didn't go in expecting to marry him," I said.

"Of course not, my dear, but we ought always to be prepared——"

"For the worst," I suggested; and now she laughed, but not for long. Mirth with her was never more than momentary. "I will go down with you to-morrow and see that you start in right," she said. "A great deal depends upon that, you know. A collecting agency, did you say? I have never heard of a collector that was worth much. However, this may be but a part of the business. After I see the place I will make all necessary inquiries."

I didn't know of any inquiries necessary to be made, but I agreed that she should go with me. So, early on the following day we went down to the collecting agency. Mr. Nevum had not arrived, but my desk was pointed out to me, and opening it I busied myself for a time with clean-

ing the writing machine. In this my aunt took a considerable degree of interest, seeming to regard it as an agent of power; and she looked about the room and passed her approval on all the furniture. After a while Mr. Nevum came in, bade me good morning and asked my aunt if he could do anything for her. She replied that she was there to introduce her niece, which appeared rather out of order, as she was not acquainted with him, but he smiled pleasantly over the humor of it. She had the good sense not to remain long, and as she was taking her leave she called me Gypsy; and shortly afterward Mr. Nevum called me Miss Gypsy. So there was my nickname established with me in my first position. Pretty soon he began to dictate letters so swiftly that I thought he must be trying my skill, and sometimes I had to stop and request him to repeat. He was very patient, however, and when he had loaded me down he turned to his own desk, and, absorbed in other affairs, did not seem to realize that I was in the world. And those letters! It was please " remit and escape the penalty," or " we have decided that it is impossible to collect without suit," or " investigation has

proved to us that you are able to pay, and if you do not call at once we will proceed to enforce the judgment which we hold against you." Everybody was in debt. A boy was constantly coming in, telling Mr. Nevum that some one wished to see him. Sometimes he went out and sometimes he told the boy to "show him in." I remember one woman that gained access to this, the torture chamber. She told a pitiable tale of hard work and of sickness. She had agreed to pay ten dollars a month on a debt, but had failed to meet her obligation.

"But you have a piano in the house," said Mr. Nevum.

"Yes, but it isn't mine."

"Whose is it, then?"

"It belongs to my daughter."

"Ah, your daughter. What does she do?"

"She doesn't do anything. She is still in school."

"Well, but it seems to me that you ought to be able to pay ten dollars a month. This man Scott is constantly writing to us, wondering why we don't do something, and he is threatening to take the account out of our hands. You have

owed it a long time and he has been very lenient with you. Now, how much can you pay a month?"

"I don't see how I can pay more than six dollars. My son went out on a strike and——"

"Well, but you see that's no fault of ours. Six dollars. Well, see that you pay that much, and remember, if you fail we'll have to come after that piano. Good day."

I had heard this while pretending to correct some errors. And so it was all during the day, continuous failure to meet obligations, begging for more time. When I took the letters to be signed, Mr. Nevum looked over them and nodded approvingly. He could be pleasant. A man of about his own age came in and they shook hands heartily and talked about duck-shooting, when the time should ripen; and as the man went out Nevum followed him into a sort of corridor. I heard him say, "Where did you get her?" And Nevum, after saying something that I didn't catch, remarked, "Ain't she a peach?"

While he was talking to some one else I went to lunch in a basement café where there was a great deal of noise and a large number of young

women from the neighboring offices. Not many of them looked as if they were on the road to fortune. Many of them appeared worn, the older ones especially, and I surmised that they had to work harder than their younger sisters. Upon my return, as I was passing through the outer office, I noticed a young and strikingly handsome man. He turned from his desk and gave me a look, and shortly after I had sat down he came in upon a pretense of seeing Mr. Nevum, who was out.

"Ah, hasn't got back yet, I see."

I told him no, with a mere glance at him, but he stood there for a few moments, and then walked over to the window, just behind my chair. I was erasing a word with a rubber. "You haven't been here long," he said.

"I came to-day."

"How do you like the work?"

I wondered if he saw that it was new to me. "I don't know yet," I answered.

"I suppose not," he replied, and continued to stand near the window. He seemed to be looking over my shoulder. I turned my head. His eyes were directed away off, at the clouds. He asked

me where I was from, and when I told him he said: "You ought to go back there." I asked him why, and he answered: "This is no place for you."

"But I have to work, don't I?"

"Not this sort of work. Couldn't you teach?"

"I should despise it."

"You will despise this before you are done with it. It is a house of lies and extortion. I wouldn't remain here a moment longer if I weren't in a way compelled. I am studying law —at night, and I work here in order that I may learn to starve."

"To starve!" I repeated.

"Yes, one must learn to starve in order to practice law in this town."

I looked at him and he was smiling. He appeared more like a Greek statue of refined mirth than a picture of starvation. "I think Mr. Nevum will be back in a moment," said I.

"Is this an advice to go or an invitation to remain?" he asked, laughing. I told him that he ought to know, and perhaps he did, but he continued to remain, while I flew at the machine as if to recover the time that I had lost on him.

"I think I hear Mr. Nevum coming," I said, halting in my work to look around at him; and we both of us laughed; and in this laugh there was a flying leap toward friendship, if even it were to stop at that. I was dazzled by him, by the way he looked at me, by his smile, by the easy and graceful insolence of his manners. And now, as if he had been waiting for that mutual laugh, he went out.

Nevum came in, florid, as if he had eaten too much, creaked his swivel chair by turning it about, and gave me a few more letters, all of a most threatening nature. I was glad when six o'clock came, glad to get out into the free air again, but I was pleased to reflect that I had done a good day's work, even if I had been the medium between heartless importunity and distress.

My aunt asked me many questions, and I told her all I knew, except about the young man. He had said that he was preparing to starve, and I knew that she could find no interest in him. That night I wrote a long letter to my mother. I thought that she would be proud to know that I was able to earn a living for myself.

When I went to work the next morning there

were only two persons in the office, the young man who had laughed with me and an oldish man, who called the young man Edward; and to myself I called him by that name. Nevum came with a brisk air and proceeded to deluge me with letters, and just before I began to write them on the machine he said: "I suppose that, like the rest of them, you'll be getting married about the time you get accustomed to the ways of the office."

"I hadn't thought anything about it," I replied, putting in a sheet of paper.

"Oh, they never think anything about it," he said. "If they did maybe they wouldn't get married."

"Then I will think something about it."

When a man laughs he thinks that in the eyes of a woman he is irresistible. Nevum laughed. I began to write, but he spoke again and I turned toward him. "I suppose you attend church regularly."

"Regularly when I do," I replied, and he laughed again.

"Like the theater better, eh?"

Something prompted me to tell the truth. "I

don't know but I do. I think the theater is more genuine. The church makes a pretense of despising money, but despises you if you haven't it. The theater demands money at the door, and when you have paid your way in, why, you're as good as anybody."

"That's right," he said. "But what caused you to come to such a conclusion? You haven't had much experience, have you?"

"Experience may lie in what we hear as well as in what we see. Lately I have heard a great deal about money, and am more than half inclined to believe that it is the essence of wisdom. And when we talk from the money basis, people may pretend to dispute, but they can't argue with us."

My eyes were cast down, for I had not wholly grown out of the shame of such opinions; and I felt that he was regarding me intently. I looked up, and so he was.

"Women are a hundred per cent smarter than they used to be," he said. "When I look back it seems that my sisters didn't know anything except what they were told. They didn't think for themselves, as girls do now. But after all,

I don't know but the old fashioned idea was best for women. The ignorance and bliss idea is not altogether foolish."

"Have you any daughters?" I inquired.

"One, off at college, or will be soon. Home now."

"Why do you send her to a college? Isn't it to teach her to think?"

"Yes, I suppose it is."

"But I suppose you want her to think for herself and to act for some one else."

"Eh, what's that?"

"You want her to marry to please you and her mother."

"By George, I don't want her to marry at all, when it comes to that."

"But you wouldn't have her an old maid, cheated of what nature intended her to be?"

"No, I don't. But what do you think nature intended a woman to be?"

"I know what you expect me to say, but I won't say it. I could say to be a wife and a mother, and, while this may be the intention of nature, I don't know that nature is just to the female sex, either among men or animals. Dis-

crimination is never just, and nature discriminates."

"Nature hasn't discriminated against you," he said. "She crowns all of her glories with the creation of a beautiful woman."

I was beginning to like him. Was this the same man that would grind six dollars a week out of an old woman who could not afford to pay three? Some one came in and I returned to my work.

At noon I went down into the same restaurant and hadn't more than taken a seat when Edward came up to the table. "May I sit here, co-laborer?" he inquired, with his hand on the back of a chair. I told him that with the permission of the head waiter he might, and he smiled and sat down. "Heard some one pay you a compliment just now," said he. "Nevum, speaking to old Clayton out in the office, called you a bird."

"I don't call that a compliment."

"It is, coming from him; not that he really amounts to anything, but because as a general thing he doesn't think that a woman has any sense."

"Still I don't regard it as a compliment. Are birds thought to be so very wise?"

"They have sense enough to build nests, and some men haven't that much ability," he replied, looking over the bill of fare. "Let me see; I'm not looking so much for what I want as for what I can afford. I'm not a bird, you understand."

We gave our orders, and he sat playing with a spoon, and it seemed to gleam the brighter in the light caught from his eyes. "Your name is——"

"Miss Dawson," I said. "And yours?"

"Somers—Edward, law-student, incompetent—learning to starve—prospective tramp. If I had money enough I'd take you to the theater."

"You take it for granted that I would go with you."

"Of course. Aren't you eating with me? I've gone with people that I didn't care to eat with. Haven't you?"

His smiling made his impudence bright. I wondered if I had ever possessed any dignity. "I don't know what I've done," I replied. "How long have you worked up there?"

"In the sweat-shop of the mind? Oh, about

three or four months. I do my studying at night —beating chaff looking for grains. I came from Kansas. Father's a failure and mother's a crank. Got a short-haired sister and a long-haired brother. She's going to study medicine—sister; think he'll be a nurse. What are you going to do next Sunday?"

What a funny thing he was. He made me laugh—made me like to laugh. I told him that I didn't know.

"Give me your address and I may drop in."

"Indeed you'll not."

"Too swift for you? Well, say Sunday after next. By that time you'll eat bread out of my hand."

"I think you're horrid. Some time, as an experiment, why don't you try to be a gentleman? Even if you are studying law it might be worth the attempt."

"You talk as if this was your first attack on the keyboard. Where did you work last?"

"I thought I gave you to understand that this was the first time I had ever worked."

"Did you? Then I beg your pardon."

"But what difference ought it to make?"

"Oughtn't to make any, but it does. Fault of our civilization. I didn't fix it. It is not that I haven't the same degree of respect for you; I assure you of that."

"But it is. You and all the rest of the men think you are privileged to be free with a girl that works. I should think that work ought to be the sign of honesty, but it isn't. I liked you at first, but I don't know now whether I do or not. Have I said anything or looked anything that would lead you to believe that I am—am to be made free with?"

"No. To tell you the truth, it was because old Nevum called you a bird. You must have said something—must have shown him that you were out of the ordinary."

"Oh, and are men free with women that are out of the ordinary?"

"Well, yes, I suppose they are. But after all, it's a sort of a compliment. We think they understand. Man may not try to, but he has two sets of manners."

"Well, with me you'd better employ the other set."

"Good. I will. Now we understand each

other. And I think you'll find that there's a good deal of the gentleman about me."

"I don't want to have to look for it. If it's hidden it isn't worth searching for. It ought to be plain. Suppose some one should make as free with your sister as you have with me. What would she do?"

"Why, she'd say 'cert,' and go ahead. But she lives out in the breezy. The fact is, Miss Dawson, I study so hard at night that I like to let my mind play when the opportunity offers."

He tried to be serious, but occasionally his rebellious mind would gamble forth in play. And I did not resent it as much as I pretended to. Everything about him spoke of honesty, if not of truth; and I believed that he had sentiment. But what difference did that make to me? He sat not upon the throne of sentiment; he was moneyless and therefore weak. The waiter brought the food and for a time we sat in silence. He had come to the final test of refinement, eating; and I watched him. But why should I have cared whether or not he were refined?

"I wish you could have seen the girl whose place you took," said he. I asked him if she were

pretty, and he answered that she was a fright. "But she caught a fellow with money," he added. "She had brains, and what was more uncommon, he was wise enough to appreciate the fact. It isn't always the handsomest girl that makes the best match."

"What do you mean by the best match?"

"What, a woman ask such a question? Money, of course. That's the object of life, isn't it? A woman, living in dread of the first wrinkle, the first gray hair, races against time; and when she has overtaken money, she has won the race. And we men never know whether that sort of a woman makes the best wife or not. It's only the poor man who is in a position to pass upon the real quality of his wife. As a general thing, a young girl, particularly if she's pretty, hasn't any brains. If the old chap were to think a moment he'd know that she was about the dullest thing in the world; but he loves her with his failing eyes, and she—loves to be loved. Some time ago I went slumming with a party, and the young girls giggled over the moral degradation that came under our view. I guess the average young woman is hopeless. Noble girls, you may say.

Yes, I suppose so; but the noblest of them will turn from the most important subject, discussed perforce, to talk with delight on some foolish thing, a ribbon or a feather. So, I want to ask you, a sensible girl, what chance is there for a hard-working young fellow who vaguely looks forward to a home of his own?"

"How do I know? I was brought up in the country."

"Yes, but that's where you find the most sensible young women."

"I don't believe it," I replied; and neither did I. He said that the most of the women who wrote for the newspapers came from the country, that they were closer to human nature, in a quiet way, and that was what the public demanded. "But even on a newspaper," he added, "the handsome woman has a better chance than the ugly one. Beauty always looks fresh and innocent, while homeliness carries the expression of experience, no matter how modest it may be."

His smiling conveyed but half belief in his own cynicisms. The freshness of his complexion and the clearness of his eyes spoke of his own morality—spoke thus to me, for my estimate was set

upon appearances. At this time I did not know how long it took abuses to show in the countenance. With the exception of my aunt, who had accused me of having read injurious books, no one had spoken to me on a subject that might bring forward anything that I had found in print; and I wondered if reading books had gone out of fashion. In society in the country, as frivolous as it was, the young man and the young woman at least pretended to have read certain books. I can recall many an evening when we thought a conversation literary that involved merely the titles of books that scarcely any of us had read. But this young man had mentioned no book. The titles even had been dropped. I asked him what he was reading and he replied, "Storey on Agency." I replied that I had not read it, and asked him if it were good. He laughed and said that it was so considered. It was a law book.

I liked his eyes when he poured them into mine. It did seem that he poured them, in a dark and glowing stream; and I was amazed at myself to think that I was not embarrassed. In the society that I had known I should doubtless have felt a sort of shyness. But I was not in society

now; this man was my fellow workman. I glanced at a clock. My time was spent and I arose to go. He reached for my check, but I would not permit him to pay for me. We went out together, and as we were going up the steps, my hand on the brass railing touched his. I might have shaken hands with him, without a thought or a feeling, but this simple and accidental touch, thrilled me.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SEX TO SEX TALK.

My aunt investigated the financial standing of Nevum and reported to me that he was not available. I replied that, inasmuch as he had a wife and a daughter about grown, I did not believe he was. "I mean in case anything should happen," she said. Of course she did not expect that any one would get a divorce to marry me, simply because I needed money; and yet she wanted to feel assured that in the vague event of something taking place, there should be money enough to render it interesting. She was a sort of a caricature of a desire for wealth. She had mused over money until she was an exaggeration.

In due time I received a letter from my mother in answer to the one in which I had told her of my independence, but in it there was not much of congratulation. "If everything were not so dull and stupid here I would advise you to come home," she said. "Sufficient time has elapsed for

you to meet me without embarrassment—I hope." Bless her, I had never thought of meeting her with embarrassment. "The Peytons are very important since their daughter married rich," she went on; "and several days ago I took the occasion to remind the mother that my daughter might have had him and that I could have been talking of coal mines. And she has had the impudence to circulate the report that Pague was the one that backed out, and that to hide your humiliation you ran away to your aunt. This was the reason that I reminded her of the truth. But I shall never recover from your foolish caper. Pague won his lawsuit and has returned to Chicago with his wife, as you doubtless know by this time. You may say what you please, but I know that Olive is a happy woman. Whenever you feel disposed to come home, do so; and I hope by that time the report circulated by that snob of a woman will have died out. But false reports live a long time."

And so Olive and her husband had returned. I wondered why she had not let me know. Could it be that she had heard that I had gone to work and was ashamed of me?

Gradually Nevum grew confidential. One day he asked me to lunch with him. I didn't know whether to go or not, and I hesitated. "I have something that I should like to talk to you about and can't spare the time here," he said; and I arose to go with him. Edward came to the door at that moment, and he looked hurt, I thought; but then he had no claim on me. We did not go to the basement restaurant, but to a café high from the ground. There was a thick carpet on the floor and there was no noise. The waiters talked in whispers. The girl at the cashier's desk looked at me, then at Nevum and smiled. Nevum startled me by asking the waiter if he had canvass-back duck. The waiter said that they were out of season. "I ought to have known that," replied Nevum. Then he asked me what I should like, and I said that anything would suit. He replied that anything was the hardest order a restaurant could be called on to fill. He ordered quail and something else, I've forgotten what, some little something that added frivolity to his character, I thought; and then he asked if I wished champagne. I replied that it would hinder my work. "There isn't much to do this

afternoon," he said. But I declined. An orchestra struck up off amid some palms, soft and low; and I thought of Edward, that I should like to see his eyes under the influence of music; and I was musing when Nevum said: "The homely lot of girls we have had in our office have passed into a joke at my expense. As a general thing the pretty girl is inclined to slight her work. Beauty, like anger, has a privilege. So I thought I'd try—one of the other sort, this time." He looked at me and smiled, and I was ashamed, somehow. It must have been because the cashier girl had smiled. I replied that I hadn't enough beauty to establish a privilege, and he replied that what I lacked in beauty I made up in wit. "And this was what surprised me," he said. "It is one thing to be handsome, but it is another thing to have a mind. With beauty nature may compliment, but with a mind she endows."

Was this the collector of bad debts? That something which had appeared as age now seemed the maturity of intelligence and of thought. I noticed that his forehead was broad, that his nose was of the dominating type. His mouth was broad and firm. He was almost handsome.

"What did you wish to talk to me about?" I inquired.

"Just to talk. Just to rest. But do you know that I secretly wished that you would refuse to come with me?"

"It was because you wanted me to compel you to respect me more."

"Yes, that was it."

"I was on the point of refusing, but it seemed so like a sort of entreaty; and besides I saw no particular harm in it."

"Only that I am a married man."

"Yes, and the harm is not so much to me as to—your wife, who would not approve of it, and to your daughter, who would despise me."

"You didn't think of that."

"No, not at the time—I caught only the shadow of it as it passed through my mind. I ought to go. If you will excuse me, I will."

"No, no. Sit down. I have something to say to you." I had arisen, but I sat down again. "What is it you wish to say?"

"That I have no wife—I am a widower." He leaned back in his chair and laughed. "But that

only excuses you, and leaves me still a criminal," said I.

"Not if I pardon you."

"But your pardon is but an emphasis of my guilt."

"Ha, you are refreshing," he said. "You almost make me think."

"Almost?"

"Yes. I could never quite think, you know. Now let us get at it in a more practical way. I have at some time or other gone out to lunch with every girl we've had in the office, in your position; and I never told one of them that I was a widower. I was never called upon to sooth their consciences to that extent."

"Perhaps you never said to them what you did to me."

"Perhaps not. They didn't inspire it. Now let us get at something else. I did not tell you I was a widower to prepare your mind for something else. You understand?" I nodded, and he went on. "I should simply like to regard you, once in a while, as a companion. Do you want to know something about me?"

"If it's worth hearing—yes."

"All right. In the first place let me say that I despise the business I'm in. I didn't choose it —forced into it. I was a lawyer out in a Nebraska town and got too big for the place. My wife outgrew the society. We were prosperous. I was contented to stay there—that is, if she had not made me discontented. She wanted to shine, and when a woman thinks she's too lustrous for her surroundings, her husband is a criminal to keep her there—she thinks. So, I formed a co-partnership with a man in Chicago and came here. I moved out of a puddle and found myself in an ocean. The waves drowned my oratory. Oratory at the bar here? They laughed at it. They called me a school-boy. I was a general practitioner. Here everything was specialized—office law. I could have gone into the criminal practice and still have thundered before a jury, but there wasn't much money in it, and besides, my wife soon discovered that it wasn't high enough—except in the big cases, and they naturally went to men of reputation. My partner was an old man, feeble, degenerating into talking about the cases he had years ago. The time came, and came pretty soon, when we had to separate.

I didn't know exactly how to break it to him—my determination; he liked to talk to me—every one else had heard his stories. But death came along and broke it for me. Then I organized this business. I never employed a red wagon. Do you know what that was? A wagon painted red. It would drive up before a man's place of business and brand him as a financial incurable. The law put a stop to it. But I needed money and I harassed the boys. I wanted to go back to Nebraska and acknowledge my failure, but my wife objected. She was resigned enough when she came to die, but she never would consent to face those women and acknowledge defeat."

"It isn't too late for you to go back there now, is it?"

"Not too late for me, but too early for my daughter," he answered, smiling. "She declares that it would be a cruelty to take her out there, and so it would. Her associations have been formed here—her habits conform to the usages of this place; and so, with the silken threads of affection I am tied hand and foot. But how I hate this business."

"If you didn't I shouldn't think you had a

vestige of soul left. I've often thought of that poor old woman—the one that owes Scott."

"Which one is she?"

"The one who had not been able to keep her obligation. Let me see, what is her name?"

"The one who couldn't keep her obligation? I can tell you her name. It is Legion. The ones that don't live up to their agreements would make a multitude."

"But this one seemed to be so much distressed. And your agent had pried about her house and found that she had a piano."

Nevum laughed. "Bless you, no. I didn't know she had a piano. That was a guess. They frequently have a piano, you know, and when we guess right, we've got a good leverage. It's the envy of the neighbors, you know, when a piano is moved in, and the sarcasm when it's moved out. We nearly always collect from a house that has a young woman and a piano. The mother will endure almost any hardship to keep her daughter in the musical swim. Untalented fingers can be trained to hide the conversational failings of a shallow mind, you know; and ignorance applauds."

I was willing that he should talk, which he did during the entire meal. I was learning something about man, about the tricks and the narrowness of his business.

"Woman's modern education has done one thing for her," he said.

" It has enabled her better to understand man, and that is the reason that there are so many divorces," I replied.

" Well, not only that," he spoke, laughing, " but it has put her in a position to be man's companion aside from any sort of affection other than that which arises out of friendship. Woman is learning to forget sex. Some of them have progressed so far as not to consider marriage the sole aim of life. And I suppose that, regardless of the overcomable difference that nature made between man and woman, you are almost old enough to believe that they ought alike to enjoy the same privileges. That is one of the principles of the Woman's Club, I believe. You don't think that a man ought to go any place where he is not willing to take his wife, do you? "

" Why should he, if they are companions? "

" Ah, I thought you had reached that age. But

you haven't yet arrived at the state of liberality which forgives a woman for a certain transgression, have you? Men forgive men, you know. The fact is they have nothing to forgive. His crime rests mainly with the fact that he sometimes boasts of his conquests; and that is more of a bore than a crime. Would you forgive a woman?"

"I might if no one else knew of it."

He put down his knife and fork, wiped his mouth with a napkin, and looked at me. "That ought to be engraved on the cornerstone of the Woman's Temple," said he. "It is the half-smothered acknowledgment of all your sex."

"I haven't half smothered it."

"No, for you are a wonder. And sitting here looking at you, I envy the man that shall win your love. It will bless him, for a time, at least."

"Why for a time at *least?*"

"Because he may not have the force to hold you. It is only the domestic woman that is held completely, or rather it is only she who submits after she knows that she is superior to her husband. I don't think you are domestic."

"I like the bouquet better than the kettle, if that's what you mean."

"That's what I mean—ideality. And that costs money. The poor dream, and the rich think that they realize; and when it is all summed up, the poor have had their dreams and the rich have harvested their fallacies. At the last the dreams are the more beautiful, but it takes a god to discover it. We can't. When we have come to know the real truth about any man, we are inclined to pronounce him unnatural. Deception has become the real, and the natural the unreal thing. Freedom of speech has ever been held as a great privilege. That is man. But freedom of thought is greater. That is God. Well, I must now go back and inform Mrs. Mulcahy that unless she settles she'll be put out of her shanty. By the way, I have a friend you'd like; younger than myself—architect. He has visions and sees his dreams arise in brick. He sees society held together with mortar. He finds entertainment in the contemplation of mosaic dispositions and frescoed natures. You would be a study."

"Is his wife dead and has he a grown daughter?"

"He has escaped. He is a bachelor—handsome, graceful, learned and rich."

"The last makes him everything," I said.

"Frankness clarified. And I suppose you have persuaded yourself to believe it."

"I ought to. It was taught me in my cradle. It is the religion of my visual senses."

"I should think that with such notions you would be moodier. The young woman philosopher usually is. In her opinion, man is the elder brother of the devil, and she hates her own sex because man is acknowledged as the master. I must tell Bayless about you—the architect. He is a materialized painter. Shall we go?"

Into the office I went shrinkingly. I dreaded Edward's eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

COUSIN GEORGE.

Next day was Saturday, and in the afternoon I walked about alone on the grounds of the great Fair. The weather was perfect, mellowing into the serious glory of autumn. The sky looked as if it had been dipped into the lake, to arise a deeper blue. In the soft air there was music, more than half a dream—a day when everything seems at a distance, with a softened sun gauze between. I could imagine myself in any country except my own. Here were uniforms from the court of the Sultan. Mystics had brought the strange religions of the earth to compare them with a religion which to them was strange and barbarous. It was a time to dream of the past, and through half shut eyes to catch glimpses of the sweeter part of the future. I sat on a bench near the water. The gulls were freighting sunbeams on their backs, throwing them at my feet. Suddenly I heard a voice near me, speaking low.

In it was a remembered note, and I looked toward a bench not far away, and there sat Olive and a young man. Instantly I arose and approached them. Olive saw me and started, I thought. But she sprang up and cried out that she was delighted to see me. And then she introduced the young man, her cousin George, from Ohio. He blushed and bowed to me.

"Oh, I am ever so glad to see you," said Olive, when I had sat down. "I was coming over to your house when I received a note from Cousin George." "Cousin George" said yes, and Olive continued: "I told you I was coming back before the Fair was over. But Mr. Pague was not hard to manage. He is such a dear. And he has taken such a liking to Cousin George."

I was young and inexperienced, but I knew that "Cousin George" was none other than Charley. "And you've got to go down to the hotel to dine with us, hasn't she, Cousin George?"

"Cousin George" said something that sounded like "by all means." I think he was going to ask me if I liked to dine, when another thought came into his mind, and then he inquired if I liked the

Fair. I told him that I was charmed with it, and he remarked that he supposed so.

"How fortunate that you found us," said Olive. "And your dear aunt. I hope she's well. Oh, you have no idea how stupid West Virginia was when I returned. But everybody was so glad to see me. Friends are so kind when they know we are prosperous."

"Cousin George" soon found his part in the drama and began to play it. "All of my people were a good bit astonished when they heard Olive was going to marry—Mr. Pague," he said. "Not that they had anything against Pague, you know. They'd like him, I'm sure. I met him yesterday for the first time. I came across Olive by accident, in the parlor of the hotel, and shortly afterward he came in. Got a good business head on him, I should think."

"Yes, indeed," said Olive. "And you can see that he is very kind to me."

I could see it. And George said that he could, too, and I suppose he meant it. He was rather a handsome young fellow, slender, with a small neck and a large collar. He tried to talk in a deep voice. He would look you straight in the

eye, but it was more of a determination than an unconscious frankness. His eyes were blue, but did not appear strong, and he winked a great deal. He wore low-quarter shoes and purple stockings, and I thought that he must be a good tennis player. His straw hat was encircled by a pink band. His mustache was light and silken; the silk-worm did not appear to have completed the work.

"You and Cousin George will soon feel that you have known each other for years," said Olive. "He is so easy to get acquainted with. I was so thoroughly convinced of this that I told Mr. Pague that you had know each other almost from childhood. Isn't that a good joke? And you'll humor it, of course. I do so much enjoy having a joke on Mr. Pague. He is so lacking in a sense of humor, you know. Yes, and when we go to the hotel you say George and he'll say Gypsy. Won't that be fun? He is engaged to a beautiful girl in Cincinnati, so you see you are safe with him."

I thought that she said this to make it safe for herself. "Come on," she added, "and let us go through the Art Palace."

For a long time we looked at the pictures. Sometimes Olive and George would stand with their heads close together, to admire a painting, a better view of which could have been obtained from the further side of the room. When close together they were silent. When apart they chatted.

We came out into the twilight. Olive was excited. She did not know it was nearly so late, she said. She wanted to hasten to the hotel, but I told her that I could not make one of the company unless she agreed to go with me to my aunt's house. It was necessary that I should explain the cause of my not coming home to dinner. She consented, but urged me to hurry. Dinner was ready when we arrived at my home. Aunt Elinor sought to persuade George and Olive to remain and to grace her table with their company, but Olive, and much excited, too, I thought, declared that it would be impossible. So I went to the hotel. Old Pague was walking up and down the room. Upon seeing me he appeared to be relieved of a deep trouble. "Ah," he said, "I'm delighted to meet you again."

Perhaps he was.

"George was so anxious to see her that we went to her house," said Olive.

"It's been some time since I saw Gyp," George remarked. "We used to play together, you know."

"So I understand," Pague remarked. "Let's go to dinner."

At the table Olive was very sweet to Pague. She wanted every one to observe how fond she was of him. At this he smiled and was pleased. And yet men talk about the weakness and the vanity of women. The old fool believed that she loved him—for himself. Vanity has its rewards and is deserving of its punishments. I was party to a deception, to an immorality; and yet I was not ashamed of myself. I enjoyed it.

In the room, after dinner, Pague was disposed to nod. Olive asked him if he didn't want to go to the theater, and he shuddered. "Ah," she said, "I know you must be tired. It would be cruel to drag you out. Gypsy, suppose you and George and I go."

Pague said that he wasn't very tired. He would go. It had been a long time since George had seen me, his playfellow, and doubtless he

had much to say to me, but he walked with Olive. Pague and I were some distance behind. "Seems to be a very nice young chap," said Pague. I said that he was. "Her aunt's son—first cousin," said Pague. "Her Aunt Molly's son," I replied; and this lie tickled me immensely. He was not jealous. I understand that old men are not, as a general thing. They have too much confidence in themselves. But Olive pretended to be jealous of me, and Pague looked as if he had just won another law suit. "But all the same," said Olive, "I'm coming out Thursday evening to stay all night with you."

"I'll hold you to your promise," said I.

"You don't have to hold me. I'm willing enough. We haven't had our long talk yet. I want to tell you of our plans."

We were now going in at the door of the theater.

Olive sat beside her husband, and I saw her squeeze his hand. "Most remarkable little woman," he whispered to me. The play was written around an intriguing woman who deceived her husband. Olive whispered that it was shame-

less. Pague declared it unnatural. George tried to yawn, but was keenly interested.

After the performance we went to supper. Olive walked with her "cousin." Pague told me how happy he was. "My friends advised me not to marry a young girl," he said. "They declared that at most she would give me a sort of daughter love. But Olive and I are as happy as if I were twenty years younger."

No matter how old a man may be he talks of being twenty years younger. He held back and let them walk quite a distance in advance of us. I knew that he wanted to say something. Pretty soon he began: "I was desperately cast down when you—left home," he said. "I thought you could learn to love me, as Olive has done, but women are differently constituted. She doesn't seem to be any warmer, but I suppose she's more affectionate than you are. You ought to see a pair of slippers she worked for me—with her own hands. Still, I could have been happy with you."

I broke out laughing. Slippers—and happiness with me! He asked me what I was laughing at. "Something the comedian said," I replied.

"But you were the judge as to whether or not we could be happy together," he went on. "It was not for me to say."

"I don't think I could be happy with any one," I replied.

"Perhaps not," he assented. And then he said: "Ah, and I trust you will not take offense when I remark that Olive is better suited to me."

"Not at all, for I think she is. She is more thoughtful than I am."

"Well, let us say, soberer and better developed," he replied. I said that I thought she must be better developed.

After supper Olive declared that I should go home in a carriage. "It is a long way, but we won't mind riding any distance to accommodate an old friend, will we dear?" This remark was addressed to Pague. His countenance fell. He said that he didn't suppose that I would object to going alone. Olive spoke up before I could open my lips. "Oh, that would never do," she said. "I know you are tired, dear, but really—well, you understand. A young lady going about alone this time of night wouldn't look well; and I'm sure her aunt would never forgive me. Cou-

sin George, what are you going to do? You never cared for me as much as you did for Gypsy, but—I was going to say that you could go and come back with me. And dear, you can go to the hotel, for you have been busy all day. Gypsy, I never saw a man that could stand as much. But there's a limit to any one's strength. Will you go with me, Cousin George?"

George said that perhaps he could. "But I want to get back to my hotel in time to write a letter to my mother to-night," he added. "I've got a good deal to tell her, too—about how happy you are, and all that sort of thing. She used to laugh at you, you remember, when you said you'd never marry a boy. But dad used to applaud when you said you'd not marry any but a mature man of brains. If you start right away I guess I can go."

Pague asked how far it was. Olive made the distance twice as great. The old man looked at me. He was ashamed not to let her have her way. So Olive, George and I got into a carriage. For a few moments Pague stood at the door. She leaned over and whispered to him. She must have asked him if she were unworthy of trust.

He shut the door and we drove off, Olive and George on the front seat. Her vivacity had departed. They were close together and were silent. Occasionally I broke the silence with a word. Sometimes neither of them answered. Once Olive replied: "Oh, did you speak, dear? I was thinking about the plans of a house Mr. Pague intends to build."

When the carriage drew up in front of my aunt's house Olive said that she was surprised at the shortness of the distance. "Why, Mr. Pague could have come just as well as not," she said. George replied: "Yes, think he could." They bade me good night, and when the carriage had turned about I heard George say to the driver: "You needn't be so infernally swift going back."

My aunt came up to my room. "Who is the fellow with her?" she inquired.

"She says that he's her Cousin George."

"Bah. Did you ever see him before?" I told her the truth, that I had not. "Do you know what I think? I think old Pague's a fool," she declared, slowly shaking her head.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCOUNDREL, MONEY.

Nevum's letters, when again I took up my work, threatened at least half a dozen unfortunates with the penitentiary. One woman had, he declared, obtained money under false pretenses, and he was doing her a kindness to let her know that unless she settled immediately, something of a very embarrassing nature might happen. "Let me see," he said, when I had turned to the machine. "Guess I'd better soften some of them down a little. They might raise the question that I had used the United States mail for threatening purposes. The government is rather skittish in that way."

He softened some, hardened others, and then leaned back in his chair and looked like a man who deserved self satisfaction in the knowledge that he had done a good forenoon's work. After a while he came over and stood near my desk.

"You have impressed me as a girl who believes that a man and a woman can be friends."

"The same quality that makes them enemies, if they have been such, ought to make them friends," I replied, halting in my work, for I knew that he wanted to talk and I was willing enough to humor him.

"That was very well said. You know that at my age a man ought to be practical, if formerly he has been foolish, and foolish if formerly practical. I don't mean, of course, that he ought to be, but that unfortunately he is. What do you think of it?"

"I don't know that I understand you clearly."

"I suppose not. You know that in talking to a speculative woman a man shouldn't be very clear. In order to keep himself interesting he must perplex her a little—just a little. He must engage her mind, and a woman's mind is never very much engaged with things that can be seen through at a glance."

"I didn't know that," I replied.

"But it's a fact."

He was making free with me; I would make free with him. "Then," said I, "you think that

with a certain sort of vagueness you have engaged my mind and interested me."

"Well, let me hope so." He laughed, not unpleasantly. He changed his position slightly, leaned a little more on my desk. "I think we could be very good friends," he said. I nodded and he continued: "It would be nonsense to talk of love between us." I nodded again, and a flush mounted to his face, seeming for a moment to redden his thin and grayish hair. "This does not imply that I could not love you," he added, after a time; and I looked up at him and was silent. "Any man with a soul could love you," he said. I realized that it was not much money that was talking; it was the prattle of small change, and I was not seriously considering him. Had he been a millionaire, perhaps I should have fluttered, but his letters to "bad debts" had been so urgent and withal so distressful that he appeared himself to be in need of money. So I was calm. "During your short term," he said, smiling, "more than one man has doubtless loved you. Am I right?"

"I don't know," I answered. "I haven't been much in society. I can recall the avowed passions

of certain neighborhood boys, but they don't count."

"You remember just the avowal of passion. Is that all?"

"I remember that one, in his frenzy, grabbed me and kissed me."

"Kissed you. It wasn't a frenzy—it was an inspiration. Come, now, I am your father confessor. Did you feel outraged?"

"I liked it. He was handsome and his face was clean."

Nevum laughed and played with an eraser that lay on the desk. "You are very human, but does that make you humane? Are you sympathetic?"

"I think so. I am envious, and envy is but the opposite side of sympathy."

"You are sharp and philosophical, I know that. Was your father a learned man, a man of thought?"

"He must have been a man of remorseful thought; he was a drunkard."

"Hum. Whisky leaves its mark in brightness or degeneracy. Did you know that?"

"I have never studied the question."

"I haven't either, but I believe it's true. And

exceeding piety sometimes breaks out, in the following generation, in riotousness and dissipation. Look at the children of preachers. Nature resents too much restraint. It will not long put up with interference. But we are getting off the subject. I was saying that any one could love you."

"Yes, I remember."

"Which, of course, included myself." He looked at me, and I told him that it would naturally seem so. He laughed. "We haven't known each other very long," he said.

"No, not very."

"But here everything is swift," he went on. "Acquaintance, friendship, love—are all of them swift. Did you know that?"

"I don't like for any one to keep on saying 'did you know that?'"

"I beg your pardon. It is a foolish habit of mine. I'll try to correct it. But you have discovered that everything in this town is swift, haven't you?"

"They say that divorces are."

"Yes, like everything else. Er—you couldn't learn to love me, could you?"

I had to laugh, not at him particularly, for he must have embodied Chicago's idea of swiftness, but the slowness of West Virginia was not wholly departed from me, and perhaps it was the lingering part of my old self that laughed.

"I mean it," he said.

"I don't think I could. You interest me, but when we love we must love aside from all interest, I should think. I don't believe there is any such thing as intellectual love. There is admiration, almost adoration—but love, pure and simple, is an animal quality."

"Where did you get that notion?" he said, straightening up and standing clear of the desk.

"I don't know that I got it anywhere. I must have felt it."

"Then you think that love is simply a desire on the part of nature to reproduce herself?" And before I could answer him, he added: "I never expected to hear a girl talk this way. You must have read books whose very seriousness close them for the majority of your sex. Then you believe that love is—physical, do you?"

"Well, the reflex of the physical acting upon the something we call sentiment, which of itself is

likewise physical. If it were not, why are older people less sentimental?"

"You are strong enough to be a George Eliot —to defy society."

"She wasn't strong enough. She only thought she was; and in that she wasn't any stronger than the average woman who wants her own way —and has it. But why do you speak of George Eliot? Didn't she love the man she lived with?"

"Yes, despite society."

"But that wasn't strength," I insisted. "It would require more strength in a woman not to live with the man she loves—but the greatest strength of all would be to live with one she didn't love."

"Perhaps so," he assented, looking straight into my eyes. "Then you couldn't, in justice to yourself, marry me?"

I shook my head.

He smiled. "I always thought it easy enough to get—well, to get around a woman of marked intelligence, for they can be reasoned with; but you are hard."

"I don't think so, Mr. Nevum. You spoke the other day of forgetting sex. That's what I have

done. I've talked to you just as if we were both men."

"Yes, that is true. Well, say that you wouldn't marry me—would you in any way—I hardly know how to put it."

"Perhaps a thing that you don't know how to put ought not to be put."

"But since we are talking so frankly and understand each other so well, there can be no particular harm in it. I was going to ask you if in any way you could make up your mind to a relationship closer than that of friendship? Could you?"

I did not pretend to misunderstand him. I shook my head. At that moment a boy came in and handed a card to Nevum. "Oh, tell them to come in," he said, going toward the door. Three men were in the waiting room. They came in and shook hands with Nevum. Two of them were elderly. The other was comparatively young, grave of countenance and with a mechanical smile that made him more serious. He was a preacher. He began to talk about the church debt. Nevum was deeply interested. "You are the man to finance this scheme," said the

preacher. The other two men nodded their heads. Nevum hemmed and hawed. He had felt the heavy obligation under which the church was groaning, he said, sighing. "And to lift that debt would be the pride of my life," he added. "If we could only induce the younger members to become more interested. Ah, the church isn't what it was, my dear brothers. There is not that earnestness, that fervor that once characterized it." The others had sat down? Nevum stood, slowly pressing the ends of his fingers together and then pulling apart as they were glued. "I think that this fall we ought to have an old-time revival. That would have a great moral force."

It was now noon-time and I went out to lunch, leaving them deep in their pious talk. To me it was not a matter of surprise that Nevum should turn with such ease from our free discussion to the moral restrictions of the church. Insight is a matter of birth, as well as of education and experience, and I knew that, like the most of men, he was only true to the minute and the occasion.

Edward was not in the office as I passed out, but just as I sat down at a table in the basement restaurant he came forward and asked permis-

sion to spend the lunch hour in my company. I laughingly replied that the place was free. After looking so long into the harassed countenance of Nevum, how fresh and how handsome was this young man, free from the taint of Chicago and its swiftness. His laugh was music. His eyes were music, just hushed, when the strains so live that we imagine we can see them.

"The old man's entertaining a church committee, I believe," he said.

"Yes, he is going to lift the debt."

"Well, if it's a bad debt he can come near it, I guess. Has he asked you to marry him yet?"

"What a question. Is that his habit?"

"I don't know whether you'd call it his habit or his nature. Now let's see what they've got in this foundry." He handed me the bill of fare. And after the orders had been given he said: "I got a letter from my short-haired sister out in Kansas, and she informs me that she's going to marry—some sort of a reformer, I believe." But he laughed in a way that showed he was not cynical; his was a good humor with just enough acid, a cranberry sauce. He had about him the carelessness that showed the carefulness of educa-

tion. He had not the hard precision of the self-made man. His graces had grown up with him, and unlike the graces of an education later in life, seemed every one of them to fit and to show off his unconscious dignity. And to me, the only dignity that has any charm is the dignity that seeks to undermine and to overturn itself. How shapely were his hands, and his gestures were as silent oratory.

"Your predecessor," said he, "told me that Brother Nevum wanted to marry her; and she may have thought so, but I don't think the old fox wants to marry. You never saw his daughter, did you? She's a whip; she pops. And I guess she's looking forward to the time when she'll make some man miserable. Yes, rather handsome sort of a crushed berry mouth—not unlike yours, by the way. But this is not saying that you are to make any one miserable. You could make some fellow deucedly happy—if it weren't against the present day religion of women. Nevum's daughter makes him toe the mark; she makes a prod of her affection for him, or rather of his love for her. And I guess he does love her. Don't think I could."

"But has any one asked you to love her? Must a girl be gauged by the fact that you could or couldn't love her?"

"No, not as to the public, but yes, so far as I am concerned; and it's my concern that shapes her, after all. When this girl gets through her Vassarization, so to speak, the old man can't live in the same block with her. I suppose, however, that you advocate higher education for women."

"I've never had enough of it to know what it tastes like," I replied. "But it seems to make women look for something they can't find—in man; and that is complete fellowship with themselves—with women. Our school was thought to be one of the higher sort. I mean my school where I studied logic and all that sort of thing."

"The only true logic is love," he said. The waiter was placing dishes before us, and I saw him smile. "Did you understand me?" Edward inquired when the waiter had withdrawn.

"I heard you. But what was there about it to understand?"

"Nothing, unless you think there is. But what does logic amount to? What does anything amount to, for that matter—anything in life ex-

cept love? Love moves the world; not such as our elders would have us believe, the cool and respectable sort. But the bounding, the torrential love of two great souls. And any soul on fire is great."

"But those who have experienced such love tell us it can't live," I replied, wondering if it could.

"Yes," he said, "that is what the bloodless tell us."

"But doesn't there come a time when we are all bloodless?"

"Yes," he admitted, for he had to, as much as he would have liked to declare it untrue. "Yes, but a love that has been true may not die even then. It may feed on beautiful and delicious memories. My father and mother love each other. They met romantically, were married romantically—lived by hard work and were happy. If they had married for money they might have been miserable."

Here was the old doctrine from a young man. My mother would have scoffed him; my aunt would have looked upon him with contempt. But he talked from the depths of his own poverty,

and no conviction is so strong as the one which comes not out of reason, but which circumstances have compelled us to feel. His ideas seemed as an essence from an old book. I could see the leather binding, the yellowing pages. But above us, in this mid-day, was an electric light; and that was the glare of the revolution. "The truth makes you sigh as if you regret it," he said. "Are you sorry that love is real?"

"I am sorry that it is not more fortunate," I answered. "Why should it always be so poor?"

"Because money is a scoundrel," he replied. "Ah," he added sorrowfully, looking into my eyes, "somebody has sought to poison your mind —and I don't know but with some success, too. Who has been talking to you?"

"The scoundrel himself—money; envy."

"Don't say that. You looked hard when you said it. I know you've got a great soul. Don't try to hide it."

"If I have a great soul, which I doubt, I must hide it from some one—myself."

"You are the frankest woman I ever saw. But will you go still further—too the limit of such

opinions and say that you wouldn't marry a poor man?"

"Yes, I will go that far. I wouldn't."

"Not if you loved him?"

"I wouldn't permit myself to love him."

"A woman who talks of permitting herself to love couldn't love," he said. I arose and he asked if it were time to go. I yearned to stay longer, to hear his voice, to look upon his perplexity, sweetened, with his earnest eyes, but I told him lightly that I must return to the office; and so I left him, with a glowing sadness in my heart."

CHAPTER XI.

DID NOT ASK A QUESTION.

I did not see Olive nor hear from her, but I remembered that she was to spend Thursday night with me, and I waited impatiently for her, but she didn't come. I thought that perhaps Pague had hastily decided to return home, and that in her disappointment she had forgotten to write to me. But Saturday afternoon I went to the hotel and found her there in the parlor with "Cousin George."

"Oh," she cried, "I must see you at once. I have been thinking for two or three days that I would write to you, but really I haven't had time. George has kept me on the go, haven't you, George? Let me see you out here, just a moment."

I went with her out into the hall, and she said, in a soft and persuasive voice: "About Thursday night—let me tell you. Now you won't think anything wrong, will you? Why, in the

evening George and I were out at Evanston—to look at the college; and the first thing we knew the trains had stopped running—something the matter with the road; a strike, I think they said. And so I had to remain until morning, but George walked back. Just think of it, walked all that way. I knew that Mr. Pague wouldn't be uneasy, because he thought I was at your house, so I didn't telegraph him; and when I returned he took it for granted that I had been with you, and was so pleased at the idea that I didn't undeceive him. So, don't let on that I wasn't at your house for, dear, it would be cruel to undeceive him at this late day, wouldn't it? And he's so fond of you, too."

I don't know what I should have said, but at this very moment I saw Pague coming down the hall. He held out his hand and said that he was delighted to see me, although I had kept his wife from him so long.

"But, dear, we don't see each other very often," Olive hastened to declare. "And just think, when I leave here it is no telling when I shall see her again."

We entered the parlor, where "Cousin

George" sat on a sofa, looking at the ceiling, whistling softly. Olive endearingly commanded her husband to sit down. She wanted to see if she could remember a piece of music she had heard at the Fair; and going to the piano she played, with her most delicate touch, a love waltz. "That is for you," she said, turning about to smile sweetly at Pague; and he was hereupon taken with such rapture of her that he hastened to her and embraced her as she sat on the piano stool. George ceased to whistle, and with his lips still pursed, looked on gravely, while the old man, casting a glance at me, was happy in the possession of Olive, seeming to say to me, "Ah, you see how fortunate you made me when you ran away."

George got up lazily and said that it was time for him to go. Olive asked him what his hurry was, and reproached him for not permitting her of late to see more of his company. "I shall tell my aunt that you haven't been very attentive," said she; and he drawled that he had been very busy. "Well," he added, "I may possibly see you again before I leave. Oh, by the way, mother will be here day after to-morrow. You must

come out to see her. Can you come with her, Mr. Pague?"

Olive laughed merrily. "Can he come? Now, listen to that. Don't you know that, as good as she is, he would tire of her in a moment and want to bring me away? With all of her virtues she is beset"—and here she left off to make fondling motions at Pague—"beset with a never-ending desire to talk about her ailments. You could never put up with that, and it tires me, but I have to stand it. Tell her, George, that I will be out for a little while, but that Mr. Pague is busy. Dear," she added, running her rosy fingers through the thin winter stubble on Pague's head, "I shall not submit you to any such weariness as to listen to my aunt's never-ending drone about ill-health. She says she knows that she will like you because you are old and can therefore sympathize with her. I resented this—yes, when George told me she said it I resented it, and I was determined then that she shouldn't sit up and talk to my husband as if he were a hundred years old. I am half inclined not to go myself, though I was always her favorite niece."

"Oh, you'll have to go," said Pague. "It

would never do to hurt her feelings. But I can't go; and you wouldn't ask it, would you?"

"No, dear, I've told you I wouldn't." She walked off toward the door with George, said that she had a message for her aunt, and went out into the hall-way with him. Pague turned to me and said that the weather was charming, and he said it as if he thought it were a discovery on his part and that I ought to give him credit for it. Knowing so well the part that Olive was playing, perhaps it might have been the province of true and lofty virtue to tell him. But I could not. The deception was amusing—shameless, it is true, but amusing to me; and now I found that in my own heart virtue did not sit arrayed in its brightest colors. Ah, and who had taught me virtue? Had not my mother pointed to money? Was not money the greatest of all cheats, the shrewdest of all deceivers? And what had this old man himself done, except to teach Olive to deceive herself into the belief that she could learn to love him! That love which we learn, what a curse!

When Olive returned she kissed old Pague—kissed him toward the door. Her constant study

was to be rid of him. And as I looked at her I mused, "How you would like to kiss him out of your life." He asked her if she did not feel disposed to take a walk, and she answered that she was tired. And at this moment she looked as if she might aptly have posed for the portrait of weariness; but a minute later, when Pague went out to meet some one who had sent for him, she bounded across the floor, sprang upon the sofa and, seizing the pillow, hugged it in her ardent arms. Then over the pillow she peeped at me.

"Olive," I said, "you have made me a party to your deception." I felt virtuous as I said this, and I looked hard at her. She was greatly surprised. "Deception? Why, Gyp, whatever can you mean? You know I never deceived you?"

"Oh, I know that. But you must have thought you did."

"I declare I don't understand you."

"Don't—please don't think I'm a fool, Olive. That fellow is Charley, and you went out to Evanston with no intention of returning—that night."

"Oh, how cross you are. And my, how sus-

picious. When Mr. Pague comes back, tell him what you think. It will be such fun—for you. And when I am disgraced——" She peeped at me from behind the sofa pillow. I went over to her, sat down beside her and took her hands in mine. "Please don't lecture me," she pleaded, with tears in her eyes. "Don't call me weak, for it wasn't weakness—it was strength—of love. One of these days perhaps you may know. But as long as you don't, please don't lecture me. Don't tell me what I ought not to do or what I should do. I know all that as well as you do. Oh, if you only knew the misery—day after day, night after night; and then the freedom—that nature intended. If you only knew. In the first place, I did as I was commanded. I was dutiful. And I tried to love him—oh, how hard I tried. I tried to be faithful to him. But nature—all of nature, birds, flowers, the very sun arose against it. Now I have gone so far that I can't be truthful. Now nothing but deception can be kind."

She sat up, she tumbled the pillow upon the floor, she looked at me almost defiantly. "It would be nothing more than right just to humiliate them all," she said. "They brought it on

themselves. My shame and my suffering amounted to nothing in their sight. They warmed themselves by the fire that was consuming me. They reproached me with my education; they said that as they had made sacrifices to send me to school, I ought to make a sacrifice in my turn. And I made it. Yes, I made it, and shall continue to make it, so far as they know—as I shall permit them to know. Hush, he's coming."

She wiped her eyes and took up the pillow. When Pague entered the room she was laughing. "Oh, that's the funniest thing," she said. "Gypsy was just telling me of some of her experiences in the office."

Pague sat down and requested me to "repeat" the story. "Oh, it wasn't intended for you," Olive laughed. "It was only one of those little feminine things that wouldn't interest a man."

"Oh, I don't know," he replied, smiling upon her. "What was it, Miss Gypsy?"

"Nothing, only the janitor of the building came to me, told me that he had saved up three hundred dollars and that he would present it to me, together with a wedding ring."

He laughed and declared that I could not al-

ways escape. "One of these days there will come along a fellow to capture your heart——"

"As you captured mine," Olive broke in; and he reached over and took her hand and held it, looking triumphantly at me. Olive smiled. "How I am sobering down into an old and staid married woman," she remarked, shifting the light of her smile from me to Pague. "Mother says she never saw a girl change so fast. And for the better, dear," she added, as her husband patted the back of her hand. In my heart I wished that she would "kiss him" out of the room. I had never found her so interesting as when she talked of her misery, for in it I heard the note of stolen happiness. In the eye of the law, morality—justice to all others save herself, she had committed a crime. I knew this, and yet I found it hard to condemn her. Both of us had been taught to deceive. We had been reared to believe that it was legitimate to exchange "love" for money. Having done this, how far was it a moral wrong to exchange love for love, passion for passion? Nature is the mother of passion. But who is the mother of avarice? Society. Then, if we deceive society, we have taken

advantage of avarice. Virtue, instilled from birth and the companion of the cradle, would have shown to me the fallacy of this argument.

"Oh, let's go to the Fair," cried Olive, with the ardor of an inspiration. She bounded to her feet, she danced in the vigor of her glee. She did not give Pague time to reply. She seized him about the neck to hug him into obedience; and when she had succeeded, she began to kiss him into another sort of compliance, to let her go, but not to accompany her. It was a delight to see her "work" him, to shape him in her hands; and he smiled and yielded, this tough old man of money. So Olive and I went out together, and when we were in the street she gripped my arm and cried: "Oh, what freedom."

On a bench near the lake we sat in the mellow sunlight. Afar off where the bands were playing there seemed to be gathering a storm of music.

"I wonder if you can ever know what freedom means," said my companion, dreamily looking at me.

"I think I am prepared to know," I answered. "Once I ran away from slavery."

"Ah, yes, the slavery that I now—enjoy," she laughed. "But there was something about you that I didn't possess," she added. "You were weaker, or stronger or something, I don't know what. And do you condemn me very much now?" she asked, with her eyes turned upon me.

"I ought to, Olive, but I can't."

She nestled closer to me. She pressed my hand.

"If I am to be defended, nature herself must supply my argument," she said. "Since my marriage I have read constantly—the bible and the moral books that have grown out of it, but nature was stronger than all. My own intelligence condemns me. I know that I am not to blame for a temptation, for that arises unbidden in the mind. But when I yield, I commit an act and am to blame. In the night I have wept over it; but out in the sunshine when it would seem that my error would be dark in the light, like a reproachful shadow, I have looked upon it as a freedom, as a rebellion against the ancient regime of tyranny."

I told her that she needed not to defend herself to me. But soon I understood that she liked to talk about her crime, because it was sweet to her.

"Ah, but have you thought of the end?" said I; and she gave me a reproachful look. "It is the June day that delights us, and we'd be ungrateful to look forward into the night unless we found the night beautiful, too," she replied. I did not doubt that she had been reading, not moral books, but Byron. "But what can the end be?" I persisted.

"We shall always love each other," she replied.

"But sooner or later Pague must suspect or know the truth. Then what?"

"Oh, you—what do they call it? Cross examiner? That's what you are. Why, it would be a scandal, of course. Weren't you and I both brought up in an atmosphere that ripens scandal? Haven't we known of them in our own neighborhood?" And after sitting in silence for a time she said: "I am glad you don't condemn me. But I wasn't very much afraid. You are not helping me to deceive Mr. Pague, but assisting him to deceive himself; and that's what he wants."

There were questions that I should have liked to ask. Into mysteries she had been initiated. From her eyes had fallen the golden scales of in-

nocence, and out of that heaven-born blindness she had come forth into the light, to view the world, herself, to remember the truth and to compare it with the imagined. But modesty is more than a film and I could not break it. I did not ask a question.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PREACHER'S WORDS.

Late the following afternoon, while I was sitting at the window in my aunt's home, a thrill suddenly shot through me. I saw Edward coming up the steps. I didn't know whether or not he had seen me, and when he rang the bell I jumped up to run away, with the intention not to be "at home," but my resolution gave way and I went to the door to admit him. Of course I was surprised to see him; I asked him if it were my aunt he had come to call on, and he laughed carelessly as he walked into the parlor. I told him that I thought I had ordered him not to come, and he laughed and said that he must have mistaken it for a command to make his appearance at—here he looked at his watch and added: "At this time."

What a picture he was, dressed in graceful negligence, with an impudent kink of hair on his forehead. His dark eyes glowed upon me, and

a tenderness vibrated in his voice. At one moment he was almost rudely at ease, and at the moment following it would seem that he was almost frightened, his face growing pale. Looking toward the piano he asked me if I played; and what was more natural than for me to reply that I had given up my music. But this was true. I had. How hard I had tried to touch the keys with the emotion I had felt; but I had failed, as all must fail who have industry rather than talent. He said that surely I could sing, but I shook my head. "You have come to a poor place for entertainment," I said. "There are several here who sing and play—when the others want to read, but they are out at present."

His eyes were grateful for the latter part of this intelligence. "Were you surprised to see me?" he asked, smiling with charming defiance; and I rebuked him with a look, or at least thought I did, but he smiled again as before, and his impudence was pleasing because it appeared to be natural. "I didn't know what to do with myself this afternoon," he said. "I tried to give myself up to study, but my mind wandered off—

in this direction. Can I help it if my mind wanders?"

"No, but you can keep from following it when it does wander," I replied.

"Yes, I could have myself locked up," he rejoined, and his face was pale and his eyes glowed. "But a man may be in prison and yet not locked up," he added, musing. "Wasn't it one of the old poets who said that iron bars did not a prison make? Is your aunt at home?"

I told him that I thought she was somewhere about the house. "Do you wish to see her? I'll call her."

"Oh, no, I'm not acquainted with her."

For a time we sat in silence, he looking at me, pale and flushed by turns. Once in his eyes I saw an expression, a dark shadow edged with light, and my heart beat fast. I looked away from him, at the window curtain, slowly moving with a breeze. He spoke of the softness of the air, and asked me if I should not like to walk, but I declined, scarcely hearing my own voice when I said no. Something drew me toward him, something that strove constantly to break through the natural reserve of our short acquaintance. To

myself I had not acknowledged that I loved him; but when I had thought that he might perhaps love me, the feeling that followed was warm and sweet. Then arose the thought of money, my teaching, the very mother's milk of all my training; and to myself I said that his love could matter but little, since I could not consent to be his wife. I thought of Olive, of her slavery, of her bursts into criminal freedom. But I thought also of poverty, of never-ending toil, of the misery that might follow from seeing innocent and helpless ones suffer on account of my selfish love. Yes, it was natural to love and to be loved, but nature herself was an animal.

He asked me if I would go to church with him, and I told him that I would, with my aunt's consent. This I felt that she would give, as he was dressed with the appearance of a possible possession of money. Soon she came into the room. I presented Edward, and saw at once that he found at least a temporary favor in her eye. Ah, he was shrewd. He complimented her in a way that sounded more of truth than of flattery; and shortly afterward she expressed the wish that he might stay to supper. Then he boldly asked per-

mission to accompany me to church. She gave it readily, as I knew she would. I was afraid that he might spoil it all by dropping some hint of his poverty, of his short-haired sister and his long-haired brother in Kansas; but he talked about stocks and bonds with such ease that my aunt was quite delighted. As yet she did not know that he worked for Nevum. Without waiting to be asked where he had met me, he had volunteered the information that his friend Nevum had introduced us, which was not true, but I did not correct him.

At the supper table he was bright and engaging; he told a story that put every one in good humor, complimented an old woman who whispered to me that he was as nice as he could be, and finally won my aunt completely by declaring that not in years had he so much enjoyed a meal.

There were several churches in the immediate neighborhood, but he chose one further away; and we walked, the air was so soft and the sky so purple with the lingering light of the sun. The minister was a young man, full of the fire of "declamation." He denounced the evil of the day, the prevalence of divorces. He said with

deep impressiveness, that there might be some who would take him to task for what he was about to utter, but that he was going to give what, in his opinion, was the cause of so many divorces. Here every one appeared to lean forward to catch the message of wisdom. "Unconsidered marriage," said he. "Permit me to be a little plainer—romantic marriage. In what appears to be a most beautiful romance there may be no suitability, no temperamental affinity, no thought in common. A girl should not trust her inexperienced senses. Marriage was instituted that woman might be taken care of, and unless her husband is able to do this, a vital fault is encountered at the very threshold of married life." Here he paused and waved his hand toward the lake. "Over across that bright and limpid water lies the Gretna Green of many a fond hope. Across the wave glides the boat freighted with romance, with glowing eyes, with warm lips. But what is that shadow that falls almost amid the sunbeams at the stern of the hope-laden craft? It is the shadow of the divorce court. Therefore, young women, ye of no experience of life, I say to you, trust not your romantic

desires. Impassioned marriage is a madness. If you cannot take reason to the altar with you, do not go. A wise divine has recently said that, while love may be an intoxication, marriage partakes of the nature of a trade, a business, depending for happiness upon prosperity. And I say, that the union of two poverties can fall but little short of a crime. The legitimate career of man is the pursuit of happiness. This idea is as old as man himself. But how constantly a lack of judgment interferes with it. If you are going to choose a partner in business you do not let foolish whims and romances influence your action. Regard marriage as a partnership, and you will see the divorce court close its doors."

This was my own cradle song, sung now from the pulpit. Surely it was true, as a newspaper had said, that poetry was dying out of the world, that it belonged only to the morning twilight of civilization. That warm glow in the heart, a glow so bright as to dazzle the eye, that something which we have called love, was to be dreaded and shunned. To judgment only we should appeal. And what was the greatest achievement, the highest reward of judgment?

Money. I glanced at Edward and his cheeks were red with indignation. I fancied that I could hear his heart beating, like a distant drum. I could feel his anger. It was warming itself by my own. And yet I could not banish the thought, the conviction that the preacher was telling the truth.

As we passed out of the church Edward remarked: "I'd like to take that fellow by the throat."

"For telling the truth?" I inquired.

"Is it possible that you believe him? Isn't love the very basis of the book he preaches from? Isn't love declared to be God?"

"Love in that sense must mean justice," I replied, speaking against the promptings of my own heart. A man and a woman passed us. "He hit the nail on the head," remarked the man. "Our own married life illustrates it. We married without any nonsense, and have always been contented."

"And were never happy a moment in their lives," Edward declared, as they passed on. I replied that they could be happy and still not delirious. For a long time we walked in silence.

The moon was full, the night romantic; the ripened year was sweet with the scent of the mellowed leaf. But the man had preached against it all—God's beauty wasted. I heard Edward speaking, a low, musical hum; and out of his chant there came the words: "Would you marry for money?"

"I didn't—I ran away, and that's why I'm here, working for a living."

"And are you glad that you ran away?"

"I am not sorry—that I didn't marry that man, old and not refined."

"But if he hadn't been old you might have married him."

"If he had been young I might have loved him."

"Yes, young and with money, you might have loved him. By the eternal heavens, poverty is a crime, isn't it? When our forefathers came to cut down the forest, love gripped the handle of the axe, but the forest is gone and love seems to have fallen with the trees."

"Yes," said I, "and those who worked while they loved, remembering the hardships and the trials, now tell us that we must have money. As

for myself, I am free to say that I hate poverty. I love refinements, songs instead of groans, music rather than distress. I don't like to shut myself up when the day is beautiful, to work in order that I may have some dark place to sleep in, some board where I may satisfy my hunger. If God gave a part of the world to me, why didn't he give it freely? Why did he put a blight upon it? And why, in order to mock me, did he give to me an appreciation of better things?"

We walked in silence until we reached home. I asked him to come in, saying that it was not late, but he said that he wasn't feeling very well and would go home. He held forth his hand. I gave him mine and he held it for a moment, pressing it; and his hand was warm and thrilling. But, as he seemed to be drawing me toward him, I took my hand away and bade him good night.

My aunt was in the parlor, alone. I entered with a laugh, but in my heart there was no mirth. She began at once to talk about Edward. She said he was charming. "Yes," I said, "he is very kind at the office."

"At the office? Does he work there?"

"Yes."

"A partner in the concern?"

"No, he works for Nevum—during the day, and studies law at night."

Her countenance fell. "A fine prospect he has," she said. "In the course of five or six years he'll have a sign, five by eight inches, in a window, twentieth story from the ground. And there he'll starve, until he goes out to sell subscription books to the farmers. Oh, I know all about it. And the first thing I know you'll marry him, even before he has money enough to get his tin sign. Then I suppose you'll go about from house to house with pins and needles for sale and take orders for cheap coffee. I know all about it. And all this time your mother thinks that I'm taking excellent care of you. But instead of that I'm about to marry you to a pauper that knows how to compliment old women. Oh, I know."

"But, my dear aunt," I protested, "I haven't thought of marrying him."

"Oh, you haven't. You are in love with him this very minute—and he is in love with you. Anybody can see that."

"Well," said I, "if we are both in love——"

She cleared her throat and gave me a look that almost turned my blood cold. "Elinor," she said, "I take as much interest in you as if you were my own daughter. If you marry that man I can see nothing but misery for you. Why, you might better go out into the country and marry a farm hand. In that event you would both be sure of work. But that young fellow hasn't yet got up to the point where he can work. So far as a start is concerned, he hasn't been born. He's handsome enough to look at, but never in God's world will he make a lawyer of himself. Collecting bad debts during the day and studying law at night! Merciful heavens. And I want to say that when you feel that you can't live without him, suicide would be just as rational and—and a good deal more lasting than marriage. I suppose you think you could marry him and keep on at work as you are now. But that would soon bring him into contempt. It is impossible for a woman to love a man if she has to help support him—unless he has lost his health."

"Well, then, I might wait until he loses his health and then marry him," I replied, not in resentment of what she had said, but in mischief.

She looked at me and laughed. "Now you give me some little evidence of your good sense," she said. "Whenever a woman begins to joke you may know that she is going to take the right view of a thing. But really, my dear, you can see that he is weak—handsome and weak. He couldn't enforce any respect aside from love—and love disobeys and goes wrong a hundred times where respect does once."

I didn't believe that. I thought of Olive. No respect that she might have had for Pague could keep her from erring with "Cousin George." Erring! I repeated the word over and over to myself. What was erring? To stifle one's conscience, one's love—that was obedience. To yield to nature, to love—therein lay a crime. But we live in the world and must abide by the opinion of the world. There was no argument to support the deceit that Olive had begun to practice. I could have startled my aunt by telling her, by showing her that money was not all, but in speaking in condemnation of Olive it would seem, in some strange way, that I was to condemn myself.

"I know what you're thinking about," said

my aunt. "You are thinking of the thousands of presumably happy couples that have married poor and worked together for wealth. There have been such cases, it is true, but the world has changed. Life is not the simple, confiding thing it used to be. Remember your own home and shun a poverty marriage. And in the meantime I think you'd better look for another situation."

This stung me. "My present situation is rather a pleasant one," I replied. "I have become accustomed to the work—I have learned the trade, so to speak, and if I give it up and go to some other office, I shall have to learn all over again."

"Perhaps so," she assented. "But you'll give me your word that you'll not encourage the love of that young fellow—with any hope on his part that you might possibly marry him. Will you do this?"

"He has never asked me to marry him; he has never hinted as much. When he does I'll give him all necessary discouragement."

She thanked me, and, what was pleasanter, she left me to myself. It was a long time before

I slept that night. The preacher's words droned in my ears, and then would come the resounding notes in Olive's voice—the notes of rebellion and of love.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MAN TO BE REMEMBERED.

Next morning as I passed through the outer office into my work room Edward looked up from his desk and nodded. He had said, the night before, that he did not feel well. Now he looked as if his bed had brought him no refreshment. His face was sallow. But a sort of melancholy glory burned in his eyes. I could think of no other expression than glory. They seemed to be lighted by an altar fire of the soul, those dark suns—and inwardly I trembled as he turned them upon me, for I felt that into them I had cast those saddened lights, those shadows more expressive than lights. Nevum had not yet arrived, and I sat down, wondering if Edward would come into the room, but he did not. But soon there came some one, a man whom I have cause never to forget—tall, faultlessly dressed, and more impressive than had he been simply handsome. He wore a beard and parted it in the middle—light, with the mer-

est touch of gray. He bowed, with his hat in his hand, and I saw that his abundant hair, turning gray, was also parted in the middle. He asked if Mr. Nevum were in. I told him no, but that he would surely come within a few moments. His look, if not the cool authority of his slight smile, enjoined consideration, and I brought forward a chair and requested him to sit down. He thanked me with a graceful nod, in two sections, a slight poise between them. Upon the table he carefully placed his silk hat, and, slowly taking off his tan-colored gloves, dropped them into it. There was nothing for me to do, and so I simply waited. He looked straight at me. His eyes were large and gray—and cool. His brow was high and broad, with two paralleled wrinkles running across it, a railroad track whereon thought was freighted, I mused. On his finger a diamond ring flashed, catching a ray of sunlight that fell through the window. Raising his hand to stroke his beard he threw the light into my eyes. In his presence I felt untidy, and I put up my hand to adjust my hair. He smiled, like the gleam of frost; and, in keeping with the smile, he remarked that the weather was slightly

cooler. To myself I mused that he would always keep it cool, and to him replied that I thought it was. "Ah, you haven't been here very long, have you?" said he, dazzling me again with his diamond.

"No, not very long."

"And I warrant you would rather be out where the wild grapes are ripening."

What did he know about wild grapes? He couldn't have known that many a time I had climbed to dangerous heights to stain my lips with them.

"Why do you think that? Don't I look industrious?"

He laughed and it was like the ripple of cool water. "Oh, yes; but somehow it doesn't seem right that you should be shut up here. Nevum told me about you—said that you had come from the country—the wild grape country and not the prairies. Your name is Miss Dawson. I am Bayless, the architect."

I remembered having heard Nevum say that I ought to meet Bayless, the architect. And I now said that I was pleased to meet him. I was. He had given to me a new sensation, and I re-

garded him in the light of a discovery while journeying toward the north pole. With one look he seemed to be able to teach self-possession. I wondered how many emotions it would take to thaw him. A man, addressing himself to one whom he believes to be modest, thinks that he must be witty, and, failing in this, is trivial. This man said something which doubtless he hoped to be witty, and I laughed, with a readiness that sounded the proof of spontaneity. This seemed to please him. Then he sat in a study as if trying to think of something to say to me. He asked me if I liked the Fair. I felt that he expected me to say that it was grand, and this was the reason that I didn't say it. I said that it was the holiday of art and industry, and that therefore I must give to it my approval. He inquired which I represented, the art or the industry, and I regretted that I had offered him this opportunity, for I was not ready with an answer, except one that any simpleton could have made. After a moment, however, I said that, as I had not the art to be idle, I must represent the industry. Again the cool water rippled. If he thawed at all, it was always beneath the ice. I was pleased

that he did not attempt to force acquaintance by any burst of frankness, as so many men do—a pretended roughness to prove that they are without guile. I saw that he was cultivated almost to that delightful dulness which society demands. Good breeding is a sort of socialism; it lops off the rebellious twigs of individuality. This man was not an individual; he was a type from an almost exclusive foundry. He was well read—he said nothing to prove it, but I could see that he was. I knew that he loved art, of the sort almost degenerate in its ultra refinement.

"Do you expect to make your home here?" he inquired. This was something more serious than I had expected, but I mused that I must not answer with anything like truth or solemnity, so I said: "I may remain here indefinitely, but I am afraid I couldn't make a home here."

He smiled. "I am a builder of houses, but it is such as you that make homes."

This was pure gallantry, and I bowed my acknowledgments. Thus matters stood when Nevum entered. I did not wish for him. I wondered why these two should be friends. "Ah,"

cried the bad debt collector, "where have you been keeping yourself?"

"Beyond the reach of your threats to prosecute," Bayless replied, shaking hands with him. And then, as if afraid that I might think he was within range of Nevum's constant guns, he added: "If I owed you or any one who employed you, Nevum, I would pay at once or jump into the lake. Ha, I thought that I wanted to see you, on some sort of business, but I haven't been impatient." He glanced toward me, and Nevum replied:

"I should think not. It is hardly necessary now to introduce you, is it?"

"Introduce us? Oh, no, we are old friends."

They withdrew into another room and talked for some time. When they returned, the architect bowed to me and took his leave.

Nevum said that we had a busy day before us, and began at once to dictate his distressful letters. Sometimes he stood near me, and then he would walk up and down the room as if disturbed. After a long time he made his usual sign, to show me that I was "dismissed." I turned to the machine and was writing, when he

remarked: "You remember I spoke about Bayless?"

"Yes, I remember," I answered, pausing in my work.

"What do you think of him?"

"I don't know. But he seems to be a gentleman."

"Yes, a woman would naturally think so. The fact is," he said, after a brief silence, "I don't know whether I wanted him to meet you or not."

"Why not?" I inquired in surprise, or rather what I intended for him to understand as surprise. "You said that I ought to meet him."

"Yes, I said so at that time. But since then you and I have become better acquainted; we have had several talks, and one was rather serious. When I said you ought to meet him I had no notion that I should ask you to marry me."

"Oh, you didn't," I laughed. "But you haven't asked me—right out."

"Haven't I? Well, I intend to."

"By correspondence? And shall I take the letter now?"

"Well, not right yet." And then, after a short silence: "The last time we talked on the sub-

ject I believe you acknowledged that you couldn't learn to love me."

"Yes, I remember. But I couldn't love any one that I had to *learn* to love. I think I told you something like that. A love that it might take ten years to learn could be unlearned in a minute, I should think."

"The talk of old maids and not of young girls," he replied. "You must have got it from some school ma'am."

"No, I didn't get it from any one," I replied, good-humoredly. "I always thought it a piece of what you might term universal wisdom."

"Wisdom," he echoed. "Has any one called it wisdom?"

"Yes, I have, and if it is wisdom to me, it is just as potent as if it were wisdom to all the world."

He went out of the room and I resumed my work, but shortly he returned and broke in upon me with the remark that young women, not only a few, but all of them, imagined themselves philosophers. "It is the result of club life," he added. I replied that I had never been inside of a club. "And besides," I continued, "it seems that clubs

advocate anything but old fashioned marriage."

"Old fashioned marriage! What sort of marriage is that?"

"Marriage for love," I replied.

"For nonsense—for divorce," he emphasized. "No matter how deserving he might be, do you suppose I'd want my daughter to marry a poor man? I should think not," he went on. "I know too much about woman for that. She has at last come to realize that a love marriage, unless there's money, means slavery for her. And it's true. There's no way of getting around it. She is always the one to feel that she can't afford this or that. No matter what the hardship may be, she is to bear the hardest part."

"Didn't woman always know that?" I asked him, with a smile.

"Not so thoroughly as she does now. I may not be rich——"

"Then whose cause are you pleading?" I broke in; and he winced.

"Well, woman's cause. Your cause, to be more personal. As I say, I may not be rich, but I have enough to make you happy and to keep you from want."

"How much do you suppose it would take to make me happy and to keep me from want? If you are not very rich, then I have thrown over a higher bidder to consider you. I could have married a man that was anxious to settle a hundred thousand dollars on me."

He whistled. "What sort of a man?"

"And old man," I answered.

"Oh, an old man."

This seemed to relieve his tension. He did not regard himself as being old. When an old man does so regard himself, he is charming. Until he arrives at this stage of common sense, he is an idiot, an ape. Nevum was still an ape.

"Marriage is a business," he said.

"An active business with some," I replied. "A business. Yes, that was what a South Side preacher said last night. He deplored love."

"He knows that young love is an error," said Nevum.

"Young love for an old lover?" I asked, and he thrust his hands into his pockets and smiled. "Well, no. An element of judgment enters in with age."

"By the way," I said, "Aunt has advised me to look for another situation."

"What, she has? Have you complained to her? Aren't you kindly treated here? Does she think your pay insufficient?"

"None of these," I answered. "She is very shrewd. With her eyes closed she can see how things are drifting."

"Have you told her that I am—in love with you?"

"Why should I, when you haven't told me?"

"Minx! Didn't I ask you to be my wife?"

"Yes, but, like the preacher, you deplored love."

"Oh, no, not on my part. I deplore the acts, the rashness of young girls that fancy themselves in love. But we won't pursue the subject any further at present. There's plenty of time—I hope. In the meantime, however, you must not think of looking for another place."

He turned to his affairs and I resumed my work. Occasionally I glanced at him; and once when he was assuring an old man that not another day could be allowed him, I thought that I had never seen a countenance more wanting in sympathy.

CHAPTER XIV.

NOT A PLACE FOR SUCH QUESTIONS.

At noon-time I left Nevum arguing with a young girl, whose indignant soul strove in the eloquence of despair to save her piano. Edward had gone and there was no one in the outer office. At first I thought that, in view of the "discussion" which the law student and I had entered into the night before, I would not go to the restaurant where he and I were accustomed to meet. But, looking in at several places and not finding them to my taste, I went down into the old resort. Edward was at the table where I was in the habit of sitting, and I was about to pass on to another table, when he laughed with good humor. I laughed, too, and thus the ice, if it had formed, was broken. So I sat down beside him.

"You look as fresh as if you had never worked a moment in your life," he said. "Do you feel that fresh?"

"Yes. I have to hold my health down to keep

it from leaping beyond all restraint. My mother taught me to take—physical care of myself."

"Just physical care? Was that all?"

"Well, with her, physical care, the preservation of looks, meant everything."

"She ought to come here and start a sort of Delsarte school. By the way, how is your charming aunt?"

"She is about as you left her—eyes and ears open."

"Did she ask you very many questions concerning me?"

"She spoke about you."

"And you had to tell her, eh?"

"Had to tell her what?"

"That I worked for old Nevum during the day and studied the devil's text books at night."

"I didn't tell her anything about the text books. I didn't know you called them by that name. Yes, I told her you worked for Nevum and studied law at night."

"And what did she say to that?"

"Oh, not very much of anything. But she doesn't think that a law student without money has very much of a chance."

"She's a wise witch," he said.

We gave our orders to the waiter, who withdrew, smiling. There is nothing wiser than ignorance—that has had experience.

Aunt has advised me to get another place," said I.

"Has she? I wish you would?"

"Why do you wish that?"

"Oh, it's not pleasant to reflect that you are shut up there with that gabulous old fraud. Of course he hasn't any money to speak of, but sometimes talk rings like dollars and might finally convince. I suppose he's about got to the stage now where he urges that you can learn to love him, and that if you can't it won't make any particular difference."

"If he has failed so often, why should you fear that he might conquer me?"

For a few moments he seemed confused. "The fact that I do fear is where the trouble comes in," said he. "Of course I don't know just how strong he is with his case—don't know how weak the defense is. I realize that I haven't the right to say a word. You and I have had *our* talk. But it does seem a shame that a girl of your in-

telligence—of your appearance, to put it stronger ——"

"You can't have very much respect for my intelligence if you think that with me the word appearance does make it stronger."

He bowed his head out of respect to this rebuke. He acknowledged that it was deserved. The waiter came and we were silent. After a time Edward looked about him, to see whether any one were near, and then remarked: "Let me modify my offense and say that it is a shame for a girl of your character and intelligence—genius, I might almost say—to be subjected to the matrimonial importunities of that old failure. Why do you want to do typewriting? Why don't you devote yourself to some other employment?"

"Typewriting and stenography offered the surest means of support. Any sort of 'profession' would have been an experiment."

"But when an experiment is a success, it is the greatest success," said he, and I nodded in compliance with his view. "But," said I, "the outcome of an experiment, no matter how much it may promise, is uncertain. And I was not in a position to undertake an uncertainty."

"I wish I could do something for you," he said.

"Thank you," I replied, "and I wish I could do something for you."

"You could," he spoke up quickly. "You could encourage me—stimulate me to succeed."

"Tell me how."

"You know how; every time I look at you I tell you. Don't pretend not to understand. Tell me, do you care for me at all?"

"Hush, this is no place to ask such a question."

"But do you? You can say yes or no, can't you?"

"I could say both, I suppose."

He looked at me with his soul in his eyes. I felt myself drawn toward him—felt my lips burning. In the noises, the clatter of the dishes, the orders shouted by the waiters behind the swinging doors, there was a strange music. The sounds that came from the street were music. His eyes were a melody, heard only by my heart. But I conquered myself, so far as he could see, though my heart beat fast, tripped over itself, missed a beat; and I almost smothered. I drank some water. "You don't care," he said.

"I do," I whispered so faintly that I scarcely heard my own words. His eyes blazed. But that was not enough.

"Is it that you *just* do care?" he asked.

"Our catechism is ended," said I.

"When you have lighted the lamp of hope, is it so difficult to turn it up higher?"

"When the blaze might attract attention? Yes."

I arose to go. He begged me to wait a moment, but I hastened to the cashier's desk and then out into the air, my face burning. He did not follow me.

At the office Nevum was walking up and down the room. He inquired why I had left the place so suddenly. He had intended to ask me to lunch with him. "You were busy," I answered. "Did the poor girl gain her suit? Did you agree to let her keep the piano?" He heard my words, but his eyes averted my inquiring look. To mix business and sentiment is like pouring vinegar into milk. "When one owes a debt, a piano is a reproachful luxury," he said.

"But if the law permitted, it would be the same with a sewing machine," said I, and he strove to

rebuke me with his eyes. "You don't understand me," he said. "You can never know how many hours I have given to the poor and unfortunate, how I have thundered before juries for them—without recompense other than the applause of conscience."

I laughed inwardly to think that I was thus arguing with my employer, and I wondered how much of it he would put up with from Edward or any other worker beneath his roof. What a privilege man grants to a glowing cheek. What a power lies in the smile of sex. How impotent is mere virtue!

He asked me if I cared to go that night to the theater. To tell a lie did not require a moment's hesitation. I replied that I had an engagement. "With a man?" he inquired. This necessitated a second's reflection.

"With visitors that are going to call at the house."

He looked as if he did not believe me. Is it true that a man expects a woman first to tell him a lie and then possibly to modify it into half a truth? He gave me the opportunity to modify; but I insisted that I expected visitors.

"Are you sure it is to-night?" he asked, giving me more of opportunity.

"I am certain."

"Well, then, to-morrow night. Have you an engagement then?"

"I think not. But wait until to-morrow and I will answer you definitely."

"Is it that you don't care to go with me?"

"Oh, no."

Some one came in and freed me. I was glad when six o'clock emancipated me from further confinement, and I hastened out, grateful for the fresh air blowing from the lake.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OLD MAN KEPT AN EYE ON HER.

I expected no visitors, of course, but it so chanced that on this night there came Olive and her husband. I saw that my aunt was again charmed with Pague, and when she sighed, shortly after he came, I knew that it was in regret over my having lost him. Clothes that were inclined to fit him were not therefore becoming, but on this occasion he was tailored into the semblance of a man of importance. He wore black, and a new watch chain gleamed on his lean vest. Soon after arriving Olive expressed a desire to run up to my room with me. And she ran, as fast as she could, and standing in the middle of the floor, panting, she cried out: "Freedom." She sat on the edge of the bed. "Oh, I have been dying all day," she moaned. "He hasn't granted to me the boon of getting beyond his sight one single moment. It was of no use to tell him he ought to go out and attend to his

business. He said he had none. No, he just stuck there all day and wouldn't budge until I did, and then he followed me."

"But he settled the hundred thousand on you," said I.

"Yes, in some sort of a peculiar manner. I am to have no say so in it until he dies, and then it's to be given to me in dribs—I believe. I've lost interest in it. But mother looks toward it as if it were the throne of grace. Yes, she does. I never saw anything like it. You remember the day when I first told you about Charley—the day my mother commended your mother's good sense for insisting that you should marry Mr. Pague? I said that I just wouldn't. How things do come about. But I didn't know how strong mother was—how weak I was. Sometimes I wish I had died. No, I don't, either. But now—now I'm not prepared to die. What am I talking about? Who is prepared to die except the one that is dying? If my mother only knew. But she couldn't believe it. She'd say that no scandal could enter her house. Scandal! But there is none. What is more of a scandal, though, than to live with a man you can not love? One you can hardly re-

spect? I have suffered. But I have lived—lived," she cried, springing from the bed and taking my hands. "Lived—think of it. And I prayed—tried to pray out the memory of it, but I couldn't. God may not have sanctioned it, but He wouldn't permit it to be blotted out. The sanctified by law became the vile. I can't explain—I mustn't. Mistress! God, what a word. But I'm not."

She threw herself upon the bed and buried her face in the pillow. I did not know how to soothe her. My aunt called me. "Mr. Pague wants to know if you are coming down soon," she said.

"Yes, very soon," I answered.

"Don't you see how he hounds me?" said Olive, getting up. She bathed her face. Why did I look at her with such interest? She was the mystery of sin.

"You girls have been talking mischief, I warrant," said Pague, as we entered the parlor.

"Yes," replied Olive. "We've been talking about clothes."

"Is that all?"

"All," she said. "Isn't that everything?" My aunt asked her how much longer she expected

to remain in Chicago and she looked at her husband. "Not much longer," he replied. "We are going to move into a very—I might say, commodious house in Wheeling. And by the way, Olive, we must select the furniture at once."

My aunt's countenance lighted with admiration, but Olive was impassive. After a few moments, however, she looked up with interest. "Gypsy and I alone are to select the fittings for at least one room," she said, appealing to Pague. "May we?"

"Yes, I suppose so," he said, and the bright hue of happiness spread over her face. I knew that she reached forth her arm to embrace another lawless joy. But I could not find it in my own wayward heart to condemn her. I was virtuous enough to try, but I failed. In her infidelity there was a fascination. I say it to my shame, but considering her life and mine, there was; and while it was my weakness to find it so, it was my fault not to strive harder to correct it, to purify myself. Virtue itself cannot withhold applause from the slave that bursts his bonds to rush toward freedom. Freedom is the heritage of man. But Olive permitted herself to be sold

by her mother. There was a promise of a reward that was not and could not be delivered. This reward was happiness. She had been deceived and she in her turn deceived, not in revenge but to meet the demands of her own love. This is not an argument to me now, but then, young, having almost been sold, it was unanswerable.

Pague was restless. Evidently it was his desire to cut short his visit. My aunt urged him to stay, but he pleaded weariness. Ah, Olive demanded life and he gave her decrepitude. When they were gone my aunt asked me if I reflected upon what I had lost.

"You mean escaped, don't you?" I replied.

"No, I meant what I said. Why, he is really a man of affairs." Recently she had picked this word "affairs" out of a newspaper, and she made it serve her. "Of affairs," she repeated with the ardor of discovery. "If he were not quite so old he might possibly go to the United States Senate."

"But he *is* quite so old," I replied. "And besides, I don't think he has money enough to take him there."

"Perhaps not," she admitted, but a moment

later she added: "But I warrant you he has as much money as Senator Cullum, and he seems to me to be just as smart—looks something like him, too."

As to his soul she said nothing, knew nothing, could see nothing. Those who worship the obvious have but one god—money.

"Opportunities don't come many times during one life," said my aunt, musing in a spirit of melancholy almost grotesue. "To the average man three times, and to the woman twice. That is what I've heard old people say. You've had one. Look out for the other."

"But, aunt," said I, "suppose that every girl should marry an old man. What would become of the human race?"

"Bah! The human race. What need you to care for that? A fine education you've had, to sit up here and talk about what is to become of the human race. Your own race is the only one you need to care for. You are the only one that is to run it. Do you know a picture that ought to be hung in every girl's room? A picture of a poor house, with paupers standing about in their misery and humiliation. I might have married

a wealthy man. But no, I had romantic notions of love and all that sort of foolishness. And what does it all amount to now? What became of that romance? And here I am, having to struggle day and night for a bare living. Oh, it's nothing to smile over. Wait till you find yourself with half a dozen children, in the midst of a freezing winter, with coal bills to contend with. Then you'll smile on the other side of your mouth, I tell you."

"But you have no half-dozen children," I replied.

"And it's the only good luck I possess, the fact that I haven't. If I had, the Lord only knows what would become of us. Now that old man may not go to the senate, but he will go to the grave, and when he does, look at the life opened to that girl. Oh, I know it sounds cold-blooded to speak of it, but if we don't speak of it we practice hypocrisy, and that is worse."

"Yes, that may be, but do you think that a girl can be true to a man she doesn't love?"

With both hands my aunt smoothed her hair down upon her forehead. "How true to him? What do you mean? What are you blushing

about? Do you mean true to her vows? Of course she can, if she wants to."

"But suppose she doesn't want to?"

"Why, Gypsy, you brazen thing. Are you such an animal that you couldn't be—"

"Animals are true to instincts and not to vows," I broke in upon her, and she smoothed her hair and looked at me.

"Even so," she said. "Yes, a fine way you have been educated. Oh, I know it's the rule among women of today to despise virtue. They want their own way, and where does their own way lead them? Surely you have departed from the teachings of your mother."

"To the extent that I have made an approach toward virtue," I replied; and with her mouth closed my aunt made a sound more expressive of pity and shame than could be set forth by word. Seeing that I had almost offended her, I strove to placate her, and soon I told her that Nevum had asked me to go with him to the theatre.

"Well, what's to prevent your going?" she replied. "I think it was very nice and considerate of him. Probably he'll take you to dinner, and you can go from down town without having

to come home. Women don't dress very much for the theatre here, you know, unless it's on some special occasion."

That night I lay a long time, thinking, wondering—looking upward through the window at the stars.

CHAPTER XVI.

WITHOUT SAYING GOODNIGHT.

On my way to the office I said to myself that I would not go to the theatre with Nevum. It was not that I desired to stand counter to the advice and the wishes of my aunt; it was not that in any way I might hold out an invitation to any sort of temptation. It was because I dreaded to see a shadow fall from some dark cloud into Edward's eyes. And those eyes, they beamed upon me the moment I opened the door of the office. Nevum had not arrived. Edward came into the room. "To find that after a night's work I had become acquainted with a principle—" I looked inquiringly at him as he began this speech and he hesitated. He had doubtless rehearsed it and it had faded from his mind.

"You'd better start all over again," said I, opening my desk and proceeding to arrange the papers.

"Yes, I will. I was going to say that hereto-

fore if I got at one single principle or problem in a night I'd done well, but last night I must have mastered a whole book. Do you know why? That word of encouragement you gave me—that spark from you which ignited me."

"But this is not the place to speak of it," I replied, looking toward the door.

"No," he said, with a drooping air, "and there doesn't seem to be any place. But all places are the same—with love."

"But all love is not the same with places," I laughed; and he drooped still more, and tried to look cross at me.

"Come, now," he said, moving closer to me, his eyes glowing.

"But *you* mustn't come now," I replied, shaking my head. "You'll make me sorry I gave you the encouraging word."

"Don't say that. You'll undo everything. Shall I tell you about last night, how my mind leaped upon everything and devoured it?"

"No, not now. We haven't time. Mr. Nevum will be here in a moment."

"Well, but what of it? Are we to scurry like

rats when he comes in? He's not our master, is he?"

"He's our pay master."

"Ah, there it is—pay, everything pay. What hope is there for a man—what hope is there for love, when everything stands upon the basis of pay—money? I read speeches and sermons where virtue is upheld. I hear men say that the dollar is not the aim of life; but give them the opportunity and they prove their words false. I'd better go back to Kansas where they still have ideas aside from money."

He was sincere, no doubt, but he was theatric. He was making a virtue of his poverty. He did not move me other than with the spirit of levity. I laughed and he reproached me. He said that my heart was hard. Then he said that I had no heart. Chicago had crushed it. I replied that I had come to Chicago to keep my heart from being crushed; and not even distress could look upon this idea with gravity, and then he laughed.

"They told me when I came that this was the most commercial of all towns," said I, "but I find that every day they mingle love with business. And such love, too—outstripping senti-

ment, rushing like a telegram. I hear Mr. Nevum."

Edward withdrew, and shortly afterward Nevum came in, condemning the elevator for having kept him waiting. He grabbed at everything, brushed papers about, said that he was in a rush, and began to pour out his letters of threats and distress as fast as I could take them. One was to the girl who had begged so hard for her piano. He told her that he had consulted his client, had urged that more time be given, but had been told that it could not be allowed. He was sorry. Therefore, unless an installment of ten dollars were paid within twenty-four hours a constable would call upon her with an execution. When he gave me the sign that I might now go to work, the preliminaries of taking the letters being regarded as mere play, I said to him: "I beg your pardon, but have you seen the client—the one who is after the piano?"

"How's that?" he inquired. I repeated the question. "Oh, have I seen him? Well, yes, I suppose so. If I haven't seen him I guess I've heard from him—either that or shall pretty soon if I don't hurry things up a bit."

"I feel very sorry for that poor girl," said I. "Life has gone hard with her and she is struggling. I believe she will pay eventually. Couldn't you give her a month longer?"

"I don't see how I can. It wouldn't be business, you know."

"I suppose not. It would be too generous to be business."

I proceeded with my work. Several men called, at different times; and when the last one was gone, Nevum turned to me and said:

"Oh, about going to the theatre tonight. Have you made up your mind?"

"Yes, I think I have. I have decided not to go with you."

"May I ask why?"

"The theatre," said I, "is a place where the human heart is supposedly reflected; and, in going there we ought to be accompanied with as much heart as possible. You have shown me, by your refusal to allow that girl more time, that you have no heart, no sympathy, which is the atmosphere, the vapor of heart; and therefore I don't care to go with you."

He looked at me as if he did not know whether to scowl or to smile.

"That is surely a woman's way of putting it," said he. "But don't you know that such whims interfere with business?"

"Yes," I replied, "and don't you know that for a business man to go to the theatre with his stenographer also interferes with business?"

He laughed and turned about to receive a note from a messenger boy. When the boy had gone out, Nevum said: "A woman may struggle half a life time to be a moralist—and then during the remaining half she may struggle to forget it."

"I haven't yet arrived at the forgetting age," I answered, looking at him and observing lines and shadows on his face that I had not seen before.

"Well," he spoke up, "what's your proposition?"

"It may not be worth considering—it may be foolish. But write another letter to the girl, tell her that you will grant her a month, and I will go with you tonight."

"Ah, very generous on your part thus to sac-

rifice yourself, I'm sure. Will you take dinner with me down town?"

"Yes," I answered, without hesitation.

"At any restaurant I may select?"

"At any respectable restaurant."

"Oh, I wouldn't take you to any other sort."

"There is no other sort—before hand," I replied.

"Hah, I can perceive the influence of that shrewd aunt of yours."

"Yes, in my consent to go with you at all."

"What's that? I don't quite understand. Does she favor your going with me?"

"She believes as you do, that money is everything."

"As I do? I don't believe that way. But your aunt is a very considerate woman. Well, write the letter to the girl and tell her I've finally induced my client to grant her one month. And after this piece of generosity we ought to feel in good humor with ourselves."

I wished to avoid Edward—his shadowy eyes; and at noon time I stole out and went to a new restaurant. But I was far from being happy, and every time the door swung I expected him to

come in with his wounded look. I could picture him, sitting with his gaze on the door, waiting for me. Then I fell to musing as to how deep and enduring was his love for me, whether it were real sentiment or mere passion. Of the latter quality I knew but little. But instinct is the surest teacher and I was not wholly ignorant. It has been said that the little girl with a doll is a mother; and the speculations of inexperience are sometimes pictures of truths hung in golden frames.

Edward was not in the office when I returned. Some one else was there, one of whom I had often thought since seeing him—Bayless, the architect. He was sitting as if waiting for the camera to snap, with his cheek lying reflectively in his hand, elbow on the table; and with a grace that it was pleasing to behold, he arose and bowed profoundly. He said that he had no business, neither with Nevum nor with any one else in the office, but that as he was passing, thought that he would drop in for a moment. How faultless was his dress; how exact his slow enunciation! It seemed to me that he must have been the author of all the phrases in my old copy book. Gently

taking hold of a consonant, he made it a vowel of liquid music. All had been so well learned as to be natural. I looked at his gray hair, so parted and polished; and he seemed to speak in silvery strands. He was a slowly moving picture of automatic dignity. A cool rebuke to all foibles, a lecture upon the unities of life, with a smile of pity for all emotion, with a silent compliment for all intellectual reserve, he appeared to me a sovereign, in need of no crown to complete his royalty. When in my mind I sought to criticise him, he met it with a look, a gesture, and it faded into a sort of thin admiration. All women must admire him, I thought; and yet I wondered whether he could compel the unrestrained outburst of any woman's love.

"You remind me very much of a picture I found in Venice, an etching," said he; and it would have been girl-like to make fun of the picture, but I did not. I said that I should like to see it. "Some time I may have the pleasure of showing it to you," he replied. "You have her form, her hair—and her eyes, suggest yours."

He did not say that mine suggested hers, and this pleased me, this delicate discrimination in my

favor. Footsteps approached the door. They passed, and I was glad that it was not quite time for Nevum to return. But Edward! Had I forgotten him for a moment? Yes, but only as we forget the glow of a sunset to look upon a pearl-hued cloud.

"I did not bring home with me many works of art," he said. Many works of art! He spoke of them as I should have spoken of leaves and grasses gathered in the country. I could imagine my aunt warming toward him, not that she cared for art or knew what it meant, but that it involved money.

"But this picture enraptured—or rather engaged me." Enraptured was a little too strong for him. "It was in the lowly house of a marble cutter and bore no name. But now I shall call it 'Gypsy.' If you do not object," he added, smiling; and I thought of a clear morning when the frost sparkles on the sapless grass. "Ah, I beg your pardon, but would you mind telling me something about yourself, your early life?"

I could have replied that I was not a pioneer, to have had an early life; I did, and he laughed,

and I thought of snow shaken from the leaves. But the snow sparkled, and I was pleased.

Then I told him of the hills near my old home, of the wild grape vines, of the black-haw trees, of the fox den beneath the cliff, of rocks and of a little stream that photographed the sun all day long; and he said that he could see me amid these surroundings, happy, with my ringletted hair in a black flame about my shoulders.

"And you gave it all up to come here to live in this grim foundry," he added; and if his eyes had not been so cool I should have thought them sympathetic.

"Yes, because I did not wish to see it spoiled —ruined. But I don't look upon Chicago as a foundry. Nowhere is there greener grass than in the parks—and the Fair is a picture of all the world—reduced."

"Very good," he answered. "Very. But you spoke of leaving home to keep from spoiling it all. What do you mean by that? How could your remaining there have ruined it all?"

He invited respect, but not flippant confidences; and I felt that to tell him, on so short an acquaintance, would seem on my part a want of

that reserve which he must so much admire; so, laughingly, in order not to appear too serious, I replied that I might tell him when he should show me the Venetian girl.

"Ah, if you had not said that so laughingly I might have requested you to appoint a time, the sooner the better," he replied; and he looked at me, half hoping, I fancied, to find me solemn; but I laughed again, fearing that a bearing of too much gravity might make it appear that I was bidding for an invitation. Now for a time we did not speak, the noises from the street seeming to freight a silence into the room. I wondered if Edward had returned.

"If I lived in your state," said the architect, "I should be grieved to remember that my fathers cut a new state off from that old land of tradition and romance."

This touched me. I had often thought of it, sorrowfully, not that I deplored the cause, but that I lamented the effect. Old Virginia was lordly, and with the delicate sympathy of the true aristocrat, had first advocated the abolition of the slave trade. I spoke of it, this spirit of humanity, these tender hearts beating beneath im-

ported silk and embroidered waistcoats; and he replied:

"Ah, yes, a bit of history not particularly emphasized in the public schools. It may be of no interest to you, but my parents were from Old Virginia. They settled in Ohio. If they had remained where—I was about to say where they belonged—I should doubtless have been an artist instead of an architect."

"But now you are both," I replied. For a moment his countenance looked as if the sun were shining upon it, but I knew that the sky was overcast with a veil of fleecy clouds.

Nevum entered, pretending to be in a great hurry. "Ah," he cried, upon seeing Bayless, "I was thinking about you a moment ago."

"I hope you were thinking of building a marble temple and of assigning the plans to me."

"It was not of a marble hall," replied Nevum, "but since it was only a dream it wouldn't have been any more extravagant to have substituted alabaster for brick. I was thinking of building a house."

"Ah," laughed Bayless, "and you thought I would be pleased to put your plans into lines and

cornices and to make you a present of them. You thought of me because you presumed I wouldn't charge you anything—because you have entertained me with some of your distresses. I don't suppose you ever noticed it," he added, speaking to me, "but it is a fact that when a man tells you his collection of hard luck stories he feels that he has taken you into his confidence to a degree that should, on your part, waive all financial obligation."

I replied that I had not noticed it, but that it had a plausible aspect and that it was doubtless true. He rewarded me with a smile for having showed a disposition to decide in his favor. Nevum shook his head with assumed gravity. "Our friend Bayless," said he, "is almost enough of a poet to pretend that he despises money."

"Very true, Nevum," Bayless replied, "but I haven't as yet attained to that state which might warrant me to work for you without pay."

Two men joke each other and forget. Two women joke and remember. One woman recalls that the other woman has said a sharp and un-

gentle thing. If such a thing has not been said, it has been *looked*. That is worse.

Nevum and Bayless, putting their heads closer together, began to talk of church affairs. I gathered from what they said that if put upon oath they both of them would have confessed to a creed. They would have acknowledged being Christian. "The way to wipe out a church debt is to increase it," said Nevum. "Build a new church, add the old debt, arouse the pride of the congregation with the beauty of the new structure, and there you are—soon to emerge from financial trouble. Old men are ready to build new churches. They wish to flatter the Lord. I've got some figures somewhere. Out here, I think."

He withdrew from the room. Bayless came over closer to me. "He is about to turn this casual call into business," said he. "But I'm sorry he broke into our conversation. I should like to continue it. Would you object to my calling on you some evening? Please give me your address."

On a slip of paper I wrote it for him. He put the paper into his pocket. Nevum entered.

"Here they are," he said. Then for a time they talked business, their voices sinking into a beehive hum. But occasionally the eyes of the architect wandered off, to a map on the wall, to the window, to me; and I was pleased to arrest his wandering look, to receive it into my eyes, for a woman has achieved a conquest over the greatest of her rivals when she draws a man's mind from "business." During a long time they continued to talk, low in their stiff collars, secrets of their church, scandals, perhaps; and I proceeded with my work, but did not dismiss the architect, for occasionally I looked toward him, with a tickling of my vanity when his eyes met mine. He pleased me by causing me to be pleased with myself. I flattered myself through him.

I saw Edward's face through the glass door. It vanished instantly. But in one moment I saw enough pain and distress to cast a recurrent sorrow over the afternoon—a coming and a going and then a coming back of a deep regret, a throbbing ache. Now I desired that the architect should go. In giving my mind to him I felt that I had done injury to Edward, though in no way had I acknowledged that I was bound to him. At

last Bayless arose to take his leave. At this moment I struck a z in place of an x, and in halting to erase it, looked toward the architect. He bowed to me. When he was gone Nevum said:

"You two seem to have had quite a visit and to have become pretty well acquainted."

"It does not take long to become acquainted when the way has been prepared," I replied. "You desired that we should meet, you know."

"All women are the embodiment of one another. They never forget a man's mistake," he said, looking upon me as if he had discovered a deplorable truth. "One day I happened to mention him, as—well, a sort of artist, a man out of the common. I didn't think I had been delegated by Fate to bring you together."

"If we enter into a discussion now," said I, "it will take us the entire evening to explain ourselves—to the interruption of the play."

"Oh, you are still in the humor to keep your promise, eh? Very well. And to take dinner with me. Very well again."

From this time until half after six I was busy, looking often toward the glass door, with the throbbing, the coming and going of the regret;

but I did not see Edward's face again. When Nevum and I went out, the office was deserted. He said something about a private dining room, but I cut him off with an objection. He did not presume to argue with me, but said that I was the one to be pleased. I did not think that this was true, but said nothing.

We entered a place that was too curtain-drawn to be wholly without suspicion. It was up one flight of stone steps. From the hall corridor an elevator was constantly taking men and women to the floors above. Nevum looked toward the elevator and then at me. I shook my head. We then went into the public cafe. There were not many persons in the room, but every one present, both men and women, gazed at me. I thought of Charlotte Corday when the string broke, revealing her bosom to vulgar eyes. But if I were an assassin it was not of tyranny but of my own modesty. Nevum divined the cause of my blushes, for I must have blushed. "The place is eminently respectable," said he. "These people are foreigners and are paying you the compliment of their admiration."

Vanity, the rose water that cools a blush! I

was soothed; not only that, I was flattered. For my mother I had danced in drop-stitch stockings. My love for admiration dated back to the nest. It had been fed often, but never gorged. I was hungrier for it than I was for food.

"You look handsomer than I ever saw you," said Nevum. A German with twirled-up mustache was gazing at me. Nevum asked me if I would not do him the honor to drink a glass of wine. I wanted it, but declined. He did not urge me. "You must not make me appear cheap," was his mild protest. The meal was anything rather than cheap. It was a feast worthy of all remembrance, to an epicure a gratification and to a novice a surprise. As we were going out, the twirled-up mustache stared at me. I thought of my dress, my working clothes, and resented his impudence.

I do not remember much of the play. The majority of plays are like dreams. No matter how vivid, they leave but an indistinct vision in the mind. To endure, they must be read. Then they may be mused over, the strong parts read again and again. But you cannot go back over a vision to note its beauties. It moves away from

your touch, like a fog. Once when the foot-lights were lowered, I thought of Edward's downcast look. I wondered if he were sighing over me. Did I wish him to sigh over me? I did. It were a tribute, a conquest and therefore was sweet. And the architect. Did I wish him to sigh? Yes. They say that vanity is frail. But sometimes it is strong. It is willing to torture itself that it may afterward enjoy a victory. Edward's face at the glass door was a torture, but it was a victory.

As we came out upon the sidewalk, Nevum said that he would take me home in a carriage. I drew back; but he had by this time spoken to a hackman. The door of the vehicle was opened. Fearing to create a scene, I entered. We rolled away with a sort of velvety motion. The air was soft—the streets seemed to be of down.

"Did you like the play?" he inquired. He was close to me. I gave him more room.

"I don't know—exactly. There were not many pretty dresses."

"Dresses! Is that all there is to art—dresses?"

"About all there is to woman's art."

"I don't think you believe that."

"Whether I believe it or not, you can't help but see it's true. I ought not to have gone into that—eminently respectable restaurant, dressed as I was."

"You could not have looked more like a picture. You were entrancing. You brought in a new atmosphere; you cast a spell over the place." He touched my hand. I withdrew it. "I beg your pardon," he said, as if it had been an accident. "As I looked upon your glowing cheeks tonight, I wondered how your heart could be so cold," he said.

"There is a glow in the sunlight reflected from ice," I replied, laughing.

"Ah, that was it, a northern light," he said with a gurgle. "Ah, but snow-capped mountains may be volcanic and may gush forth fire," he added. I gave him more room. "You seem to be afraid of me."

I pretended to be surprised. "Afraid of you? Why?"

"I don't know. And your heart may one day gush fire—celestial fire. You could enchant a god."

"I would rather inspire a plowman." I said this because I thought it poetic.

"'Ah," he quickly replied, "but if you should you would then leave him helpless."

"The inspired don't need help. They conquor."

"Then if you should inspire a plowman you would—give yourself to him."

"Perhaps he would take me. I could not defend myself against the power of my own inspiration."

"But why think of a plowman? There is no man that would not be proud of you, your appearance, your mind."

"I didn't know I had a mind."

"Don't blaspheme the source of such an endowment. It is a constant marvel to me, a wonder never ceasing. You were surely intended for great things."

"To beg for girls that they may keep their pianos."

"Please don't speak of that," he said in tones of pleading. He was so near me now that I could feel him trembling. "You make me believe that

your coming with me was but a sacrifice. Was it?"

"Dinners, music, theatres are not sacrifices. They are pleasures."

"Thank you. But speaking of your mind. You are intended for something better than—"

"Writing duns," I broke in.

"Well, yes. Better than working at all. You ought to adorn a home."

"Any one who has a home ought to adorn it," I replied.

"Why do you quibble so? Why don't you —at least try to be serious?"

"We are never serious when we try, but when we can't help it."

"Well, then, why don't you be serious without trying? But wait a moment before you say something to sidetrack me. You said a moment ago that any one who has a home ought to adorn it. That is true. And is it not true, also, that in the economy of this life every one—every woman ought to have a home? Have you ever thought of that?"

"Yes, I have thought of it."

"But I offer you a home and you refuse it. You said you could not love me."

He was so serious, and this idea was so ridiculous. With my handkerchief I smothered the noise of my laughter. Saying that I could not love him was refusing a home. I shrieked inwardly. "Don't you remember?" he went on. "Surely you do."

It was with an effort that I replied: "Yes, I remember saying that I could not love you."

"Do you still hold that opinion?"

"The truth remains the same. It was not merely an opinion."

"I could make you happy."

"Which is to say that you could compel me to be happy. Real happiness is a privilege that we permit one to enjoy. We might compel submission but not happiness."

"Quibbling again. Whose foolish dialogues did you study at school? Who strove with vaporous logic to smoke the truth out of your mind?"

"That is very good. I like you best when you talk that way. You give me something to

think over, to remember and to wonder as to what you could have meant."

"But when my meaning is perfectly clear—and honorable; then you don't like me so well. I have asked you to be my wife and you continue to quibble."

"I thank you for your complimentary lack of judgment as to myself. But I can't accept the honor. I should not make you a good wife. A domesticated vanity is a very pretty adornment, but my vanities have not all of them been 'tamed.' I shudder at the thought of fetters unless I should forge them myself. The King of Cypress was chained with gold, but he was nevertheless a prisoner."

"Come, please don't talk like a librarian. Be a natural woman."

"But you are asking me to be unnatural. You want me to marry you and that, too, when I have said that I can't love you. If I could love you, pleading on your part would not be necessary. I would rush to your arms and almost strangle you with affection."

He sighed. "You are a puzzle to me. We see precocious children, but a precocious wom-

an—is unnatural, almost unheard of, a sarcasm directed at her own sex." I had heard this before—from the Judge. Nevum continued: "I tell you that I am a man accustomed to talk on knotty points, tangled phases of life—to juries who hold life or death in their hands. Circumstances have forced me into a distasteful business, but I shall get out of it. I am not too old. I have a daughter about grown, but I married young."

"I don't doubt that you are fitted by education and experience for better work. I don't question that you are sincere, at this moment. But the spirit that stimulates argument now, would, if we were married to each other, foster quarreling. You have paid tribute to my mind. But don't you know that mental and moral qualities are not necessarily twin sisters? They may not be even second cousins. In fact they may be strangers."

"But gracious alive," he exclaimed, "you don't mean to hint that you are not wholly moral, do you?"

"I'm not hinting at all. I am saying. But I don't know to what degree I am moral. I have never been tried. My classmate was tried and

she—I don't know whether to say that she fell or arose. She embraced nature. She set aside her unnatural vows. I might possibly do the same. The warmth of my heart might lull my brain to sleep."

He protested that he could not believe me. He swore that he would trust me to the end of the world. "And at the end of the world," said I, "there might be a jumping off place. Suppose I should jump? I wish that I could be frank without giving offense."

"I don't see how in the name of God you could be more frank," he replied, with a groan. "If you think anything else, say it. Don't think to spare me."

"Well," said I, "mystery of sex is the stimulous of marriage. Old men—I beg your pardon—old men do not come with that mystery. With them the mystery seems to have been solved. You do not appeal to me sexually."

"God, what frankness," he groaned.

"I wish you had said, God what sense," I replied.

He sighed deeply and said: "You talk like a professor of physiology." And after a few

moments he added: "Then you place sexuality above everything."

"In the matter of marriage—love? Yes. Nature has done so. And when we oppose nature, we suffer for it."

For a long time we were silent. The carriage rolled on, street lamps flashed glimpses of light in upon us. I was not acquainted with the landmarks, but it seemed from the time consumed that we must be nearing my home. I did not wish to resume the conversation. I had spoken with a freedom that had surprised even myself, but I did not regret a word. I drew a sort of contentment, not to say a congratulation, from the belief that I had been honest.

"I never expected to hear a young woman talk that way," said Nevum. "So you refuse to be my wife."

"I would not be so harsh as that. I decline to be your wife; and, very much for your good."

"More unnecessary boldness. If all women should talk to all men as you have talked to me, there wouldn't be any more marriages."

"Perhaps not," I assented.

"And the race of man would come to an end," said he.

"That wouldn't hurt the past and there wouldn't be any future to care," I replied; and a glimpse of light revealed that he was pressing his hand to his forehead.

"It is evident that you don't care for the love of an honest man."

"Honesty does not necessarily stimulate love. A woman loves because she can't help it and not because she has a reason for loving. Every woman who loves is doomed to suffer, no matter how much she may be loved in return. Her own love enslaves her."

"Ah," he cried, "that is my argument. It proves that she ought not to love so much, that without this intoxication she really would be happier. Let love be a heightened friendship. Let it manifest itself not in delirium but in the adornment of a home."

The carriage slackened its speed, veering toward the side walk. "Here we are," said I.

He took my hand. I did not resist him. Since there was so perfect an understanding it could be in no other spirit than that of respect.

But he attempted to put his arm about me, to kiss me. I turned upon him with a force that must have left no doubt as to my feelings. The old fool had mistaken my frankness. He tried to apologize, saying repeatedly that he meant no harm, but I left him without saying good night.

CHAPTER XVII.

SAID SHE WAS SILLY.

My aunt had gone to bed but I went to her room, gave an account of the night, and told her that I should have to seek another place. She sat up in bed, for a time too indignant to speak; and when she spoke she said: "Trying to compel you to marry him, and the chances are that he rents the house he lives in."

And so to her, his crime was that he was not sufficiently well off. I emphasized the fact that he had unmannerly striven to kiss me, and she said: "Yes, and it shows how he was brought up. But did he tell you how much he was worth?"

"No aunt, and I didn't care. I wouldn't marry him even if he owned half of the South Side."

"Oh, don't be extravagant, my dear," she replied. "Be reasonable, at least." And then she added: "I don't think you'll have any trouble in finding another situation. Good looking girls never do. But my dear, you must curb your

opinions. A woman to get along well with men shouldn't have any opinions, except on trivial matters. Try to remember this. I am older than you and therefore have more experience, and I know that opinions have hurt me, many and many a time. If you think of a bright thing, try to engineer it so that the man may say it. Laugh. You've got good teeth—so laugh. That will be an answer to every question. Well, tomorrow you may go down and find another place. You'd better send a note very early telling that Nevum you are not coming. And remind him to send any little balance that may be due you, out here—at once. You'll find a letter for you on the mantelpiece."

The letter was from my mother. After saying that she thought she would write me a few lines she informed me that Samuel was not doing much of anything, that she needed several articles of dress and that as soon as I could I must send her some money. "While you are living in luxury you must remember those who are not so fortunate," said she, underscoring luxury. "I know you will smile at me, but there is going to be a ball over at Howerson's and I

want to go, especially as they have invited me most cordially; and you know that they are at the top of our heap. So, if you can fit me out with any little thing, please do so. Annie Patterson, *nee* Sampson, you remember, was over the other day, and a more miserable woman I never saw. She married for love, you remember, bidding defiance to her mother's advice. She could have done well, but she chose to do otherwise. The man she married worked hard enough, and he seems to think a great deal of her, but she lives in a mean little old house and no one cares to go to see her. And why? Not because they don't think just as much of her as ever they did, but for the reason that they don't care to look upon her in her want. There was a case of most passionate love for you, and what has it amounted to? Misery. Remember that. Misery. I suppose you see Olive quite frequently. Her mother has just received a letter from her, saying that she spent the night with you not long ago. And she is so happy. I never gave Olive credit for very much sense—thought she was giddy and all that—but I must say she has turned out to the credit of the family."

I wrote to her that night, enclosing more money than I could spare. I smiled to think that Olive had shed such luster upon the family name. I recalled the girl who had married for love and so miserably; at school she had been bright, in society a sort of belle. The neighbors said that she had thrown herself away, on that man, that honest but unfortunate man, and doubtless she had. She would teach her daughters to marry for money.

Early in the morning I dispatched a note by messenger to Nevum, telling him that under the circumstances I could not possibly come to his office again. I thought of sending some word to Edward, but decided not to, that it might bring him out to the house and involve me in an argument or at least a discussion with my aunt. I knew that he would come soon; and I was possessed of a sort of hunger to see him, to say something that might drive the shadows from his eyes. And yet I felt that the time would soon come when I should have to defend myself against him, his love, his passion, his begging me to marry him. It had been so sweet, so freshly sweet to indulge my fancy, to permit

my mind to enwrap him in fondness. But now I must steel myself against myself. My mother was not wholly wrong. Love has no common sense; passion looks only upon the present; so while there was common sense left to me, it ought to protect me. I must be sane.

Before starting upon an indefinite round, to look for a situation, I called at the hotel to see Olive. A rap on her door was answered by an invitation, in her voice, to enter. I did so; and she and Pague both looked as if they might have just reached the " curtain " of a little scene. She was lolling on a sofa, book in hand, eyes red. He was sitting at a table with a sort of blank book open before him. Olive sprang up, embraced me, kissed me on both cheeks. Pague held out his hand and said that he was more than pleased to see me. He could have made his assertion more pleasing had he added: " And I must go now." But he didn't; he closed his book, crossed his legs and twirled his thumbs.

" We have just had a row over my cousin," said Olive.

" Not a row, my dear," replied Pague.

" Yes, Gypsy, a positive row. I told him just

now that when we returned home he mustn't speak of having seen Cousin George here—the fact is, you, know, he left the military school without permission. And Mr. Pague says that his mother ought to be apprised of the fact. But that isn't all. Mr. Pague doesn't want me to see him any more."

"Now my dear, I didn't say that," Pague interposed. "I said that it didn't look well for you to be together so often. There's no harm in it, I'm sure, but people will talk, you know."

"And he has complained of expenses," said Olive. "Oh, I never thought it could come to this—complaining of what little pleasure I take in being here. He has actually said that we couldn't afford it. Oh, I never thought it could come to that."

"You are wrong, my dear," Pague insisted. "I said I couldn't afford to lose so much time from my business. I must look after my affairs or after a while I'll have nothing to look after."

"Well," she cried, "why don't you give me the money you promised me? Then you can go on and look after your affairs. No, you think I'm a child to be scolded and then petted and

then sent to bed. But I'm not. I am a woman."

"I believe you are, my dear," he agreed, "and I am trying to treat you as such. The fact is that I must go home tomorrow."

"Then will you let me go out and stay with Gypsy tonight? Do this and I will consent to go home."

"Your aunt keeps a boarding house, I believe," said Pague, speaking to me. And then, nodding at Olive, he continued: "We can both go out there tonight and remain until it is time to go to the train. Will that plan suit you?"

"No, it won't. It shows that you don't trust me. Do you suppose that two young women want a man stuck around all the time? Don't you know that two girl friends have little secrets so foolish that—that they don't want any man to hear them? No, the fact is, Mr. Pague, you haven't any confidence in me. Oh, it's that and you needn't say it isn't. You have found fault with me because I can't sit up like a lawyer and talk about business. You turn my youth to flaws. Yes, you do, and you know it. And this is what I get for loving you."

She turned about upon the sofa and buried her

face in a pillow. Pague arose with a sigh, went to her, sought to soothe her, slipped his hand beneath the pillow, drew her head up against his breast and spoke tender and foolish words. But she sobbed that he had no confidence in her. Finally he told her that he would give his consent; and she arose with a smile, the tears gleaming in her eyes; and she threw her arms about him and kissed him and then flew to me and then back again to him to reward him with another kiss. Soon after this re-establishment of perfect confidence, and while Olive was sitting on the sofa beaming pleasure from her eyes, I remarked that I was out to look for a place, and that, too, without a "character" from my former employer. Olive declared that she would go with me. Pague objected. "Why not?" she asked, pouting.

"Well, because—well, I don't want you to go into office buildings as if you were looking for work."

"Oh, are office buildings such dreadful places?" she inquired. "I thought they were places of business and not—traps for women," she went on. "But of course you ought to know.

You have been about them a good deal. However, if they are not fit for me, surely they are no place for you. A man oughtn't to go anywhere if he is ashamed to have his wife go there. No, he oughtn't."

"Olive," he cried, losing patience, "for the Lord's sake don't be silly."

"Silly," she repeated. "Oh, now I understand you. You think I'm silly. You don't want me to go out alone because you think I might disgrace you. Why didn't you tell me that before? You were wrong to keep it from me. I wouldn't have treated you that way. But I'm going just the same. Did you hear what I said? I said I was going just the same."

"If you go, I go," he replied.

"Oh, you are? Now that would be a pretty come off, wouldn't it? All of us trooping in, asking for a job. They would take us for your granddaughters and think we were out trying to get work to support you. Yes, by all means go with us, dear."

"Well, how long will you be gone?" he inquired, looking at his watch.

"I can't tell as to that," I replied. "It might

not take more than half an hour and it might take all day. It is necessary that I should find a place and I must keep at it until I do."

I arose to go. Olive took down her cloak and hat. "Come on," she said to him.

"No, I won't go," he replied. "It seems that your only thought is to get away from me and it would be cruel not to indulge you. Go on. Take good care of her, Miss Gypsy."

Out in the corridor Olive clutched my arm and giggled. "Oh, the free air," she said.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FEELING ABOUT FOR HIS HAT.

The early autumn sun was glorious. Champagne bubbles were rising in the air, bursting, intoxicating us. "Let us go to the Fair," said Olive. "There is plenty of time to get a situation, and such days as these don't come often. It is a poem, so new that it doesn't seem ever to have been read before. Look at it, the leaves are uncut." She almost danced along the sidewalk.

"Let us at least make a pretense," I replied. "We'll go up here."

We entered a large real estate office. A young man came forward to a railing and asked as to whom we wished to see. I told him that I desired to speak to the head of the firm—concerning employment. He inquired if I had entered into correspondence with him. I pretended that I had. This deception amused Olive, and it ought to have caused me to blush, but it didn't.

We were shown into a private office. The manager, a young and brisk man, regarded us with surprise. He was all "business" and I saw that no levity would be tolerated by him. It is easier to flatter age than youth.

The manager inquired if he could be of any service to us. I told him without a smile that I was looking for employment as a stenographer.

"I don't know but your visit is timely," he replied. "I think we need another girl." He touched a button. A bell rang. A man appeared. "Ask Roland if he needs a stenographer."

The man withdrew. I tried to look "business" at the manager. The man returned and said that Mr. Roland would see me. We passed through a large office where there was a hailstorm of typewriting. No one looked up at us. Within a railed off square sat another man that looked like "business." He glanced at us and inquired which one was it that desired employment. Upon receiving the information he seemed pleased. He asked as to the salary I had received formerly. I told him, making it just

a little higher. "Very well, call tomorrow morning and we may enter into an arrangement," said he.

"Why, how easy it was," said Olive as we went out. "And look at the money you'll get —almost enough to dress on. But more than all that you are free—*free.* You don't know what that word implies. It's the most beautiful word in the language. Every time I get out I repeat it over and over to myself."

She continued to repeat the word over and over. "But where are we going now?" she inquired. "Not back to the hotel, are we?"

"Don't you think we'd better go back there, report progress and then go to the Fair. Then you can go over and stay all night with me, as you had intended, you know."

"Yes, but I always have such a hard time in getting away. I'd have to go over all of my arguments again."

This was true, I was prepared to believe; so we went to the Fair, now dying its sublime death. The leaves were tinged with the chill of the night, the South Sea Islanders were shivering. The brides of June looked tired, and

bridegrooms had begun again to think about business at home and were worried. Romance was dying with the Fair. Ah, would it ever live again for those brides, those hearts arrayed in bedraggled sentiment? The end of the honeymoon, the beginning of the failure of marriage! Temperament, so artfully hidden, would now rise into view. Opinions put submissively aside would now assert themselves. Cynicism, the surgeon of marriage, would soon begin its unsuccessful operation.

"New shoes—brides, brides," said Olive. "But perhaps they love their husbands. Such a thing can be, you know."

"I don't know," I answered. "But I should hope so."

"Yes, there is such a thing as love," she said. "I know it. If I don't, who does?"

I asked her if she would rather be married to a poor man whom she loved and be compelled to work for her living. She turned to me with her eyes ablaze. "Yes—rather take in washing," she replied. "Ah, we might sing over the wash tub, but over an unhappy marriage we can

only groan. You hear him tell me not to be silly. He does not suspect that I have a mind."

"That you took a prize for an essay," I replied.

"Essay! I don't suppose he thinks I can more than write my name. Never has he tried to engage me on a subject that involved any thought. He thinks that I ought to find perfect happiness in the trinkets he gives me. Let's not go in here. It's the woman's building—play house for men to laugh at. Let's go to the art palace."

We halted before a picture, the picture of a young girl sitting at the feet of an old man, gazing up into his face. "Come on," said Olive, "the girl may be his wife."

"His granddaughter," I replied, admiring the picture.

"No," she insisted, "let us go. You never can tell, and I'm not going to take any chances."

She despised age. In it she saw nothing venerable, nothing wise, no experience of life, no kindliness—nothing save the departure of youth and therefore an evil. But before the picture of a young shepherd with red lips and a distant

look in his eyes she halted for a long time and mused. The work was of trifling merit, but the lips were red and so were the lips of "Cousin George." Upon coming out of the Art Palace Olive said that she desired to telephone to her husband, but not from the Fair—from a drug store near my home, as if that could make any difference. So when we had passed out of the grounds she telephoned that she was at my house and would return to the hotel early on the following morning. My aunt was glad to see her, as she was the wife of a rich man, and still she regarded her with a regret as if she had wantonly stolen that which by right had belonged to me.

Immediately after dinner Olive became restless and it was not long before she declared that she had repented of the way in which she had parted from her husband, and must therefore go home at once. "I should like so much to stay all night with you," she said, "but if I do I'll never hear the last of it. Oh, you don't know what a mean memory he has for little things."

We were sitting in my room. There was no one to overhear what I might say to her. And

I spoke freely what was in my mind. "Olive," said I, "you had no intention of staying with me."

"What, do you think I'm so changeable?"

"No, I haven't accused you of being changeable. I said you had no intention of staying with me. You are going to meet Charley."

"Why Gypsy!"

"I knew it as soon as you said you were coming to stay all night with me. But suppose Mr. Pague should come down here tonight. What could I tell him?"

"But he won't come away down here," she cried, stamping her foot. "What makes you say such unpleasant things? What right has he got to come? Haven't I told him I'd be home early tomorrow morning?"

"Yes, but he is beginning not to believe you."

"Now what put that into your head? He does believe me. I'm sure he has no cause to disbelieve me—so far as he knows. Yes, I am going to meet Charley. I am dying to see him. I have passed two days of absolute torture. Why shouldn't I meet him now—now that we have —gone as far as we have?"

"But Olive, you place me in such a position."

"Such a position! By making you my confidante? Gypsy, I never expected to be scolded for having faith in you."

She pouted; she picked at the feather in her hat. She threw the hat upon the bed, went to the window and "tra-lard" an idle tune; she said that she wouldn't go; she sat down, and sighing, folded her hands helplessly. Then she arose and put on her hat. "Yes, I must go," she said. "And if Mr. Pague should have the —ingratitude to come and inquire for me, tell him—what you please. I shall leave that to your invention."

She was now standing before the mirror, adjusting her hat. "Puritan, do you think I've fallen very low? Ah," she laughed, "you would like to think so, but you can't." She posed. No matter how many lives we may be promised, we are assured of but one on this earth. After this one, the purifying process begins. Until we are pure, why pretend to be? But what is purity? Tell me what it is?"

"I don't know. From your point of view, it

is doing what you choose. From mine—I don't know."

"No?" she laughed. "You don't want to know. Once you ran away from an—aversion, let us call it. And a woman brave enough to run from that, will, if tempted, run—*to* her tempter. But who was my tempter? My temperament, my nature. Who could have changed the course of my nature? My parents; but they didn't. They wanted me to be cold, but wanted that coldness to crystallize into a love for money. I did as they wanted me to. Well, good-by. I may not see you again for a long time."

She started toward the door, looking back at me. I did not follow her. She ran back to me, embraced me and tripped lightly down the stairs. Shortly afterward my aunt came up. "Why, I thought she was going to stay all night with you," she said.

"She intended to, but has been stricken with remorse—to think of leaving her husband so long alone."

"Ah, and still you think a young girl can't care for an old man. You can learn much from Olive, my dear."

"Yes, I have learned much from her."

"Let us hope, then, that you may profit by it."

"Yes, we may hope so, but whether I shall or not remains for the future to determine."

Shortly after dinner, while some of the boarders were singing in the parlor, Edward came. There was no other place, so I took him into the general reception room where men smoked and women talked Bohemianism, maccaroni suppers and steins of beer. I introduced him and I fancied that I could see their names floating out of his mind. He was restless. He sighed as he sat on the sofa. He asked me to take a walk with him. I replied that I could not, that my aunt was expecting visitors and that I had promised her to remain. After a time the boarders went out, leaving us alone. Instantly he seemed as if a rush of words had shaken him with their torrent, but he looked down again, without speaking. "You were going to say something," said I, regretting that I had been untruthful.

"Yes. I was going to say that I was greatly shocked today. I said nothing until noon, watch-

ing the door; and then I went into Nevum's room. He was alone, walking up and down. His letters had not been opened. I asked him if you were ill. He answered that you were well, so far as he knew. Then I boldly inquired why you had not come. He said that you had decided not to come again. That was all he would say. Now you tell me, please."

I told him as much as I thought he ought to know, made frankness a virtue, spoke of the theatre and the ride home—of the proposal. "Tell me exactly what you said to him," Edward insisted. "What did you tell him? I want to know—want to be made to feel that you left him no hope whatever. I beg your pardon if I seem too much interested. But you know—my heart."

I did know it and it was of no use to pretend that I didn't. "My refusal could have but one meaning—the manner of it," said I. "He knows that I shall never marry him."

"Yes," said Edward, leaning over, with his head in his hands, "but you ought to have made it stronger. You don't know how dearly he loves an argument, how unwilling he is to quit—how

resourceful he is. He will come out here. Promise me you won't see him."

"How can I promise such a thing? Why should I promise it? I don't care to see him; you know that. But even if he should come a thousand times and plead on his knees, it would make no difference. He hasn't money enough to buy me."

"To buy you! Good Lord, don't intimate that any one has that much money—that any amount of money could influence you."

"Don't talk so loud," I cautioned. "Some one might hear."

"I beg your pardon. My words come with a roar, and it's all I can do to soften them. Sit over here and I won't have to talk so loud."

I moved nearer to him. His face was flushed as if with fever and his eyes glowed like lamps with darkened shades. He was thrillingly handsome, all animation, his gestures bearing the unconscious grace of tragedy—the stroke that must stab an enemy or one's self. Sometimes a word would seem to be drawn out with a quick flash, like a short Roman sword; and with one of his sudden motions he would seem to fall upon

it. Sometimes I watched him without hearing what he said. But more than once, now that I was even nearer him, I cautioned him not to utter his words with such force. "It is despair," he said; and at this moment his tragedy caught the gleam of a humorous light that fell from somewhere and I could not repress a smile. "How can you laugh at such a time," he groaned.

"Because there is nothing to be so very serious about," I replied. "You talk as if some great crime had been committed. He pleaded with me to marry him. Does that call for such —agony?"

"You may well call it agony. It is agony to me. And the agony comes out of my own weakness—or rather my helplessness. You won't promise me anything, and I haven't the moral or the intellectual strength to compel you. It is true that we haven't known each other many days, but sometimes the heart is a Joshua that commands the sun to stand still. And so, between the morning and the night, an eternity might endure. I have employed no insinuations. I have not been able to hide from you a great

truth—the truth that comes but once into the life of a sincere man. You know that I not only love you—you know that I worship you—that for one word I could fall upon my knees at your feet and die there, of happiness."

Now I was standing with my hands on the back of a chair. His words frightened me. I had expected something, a torrent of some sort, but these words, spoken in torture, brought me to my feet. I was seized with a desire to run away—out into the night, over by the shore of the lisping lake. My heart beat wildly; it was happy—but my mind rebelled.

"Now you know," he said. "I might talk always and I could tell you no more. But there is something you must tell me. No, don't draw back from me. I won't touch you—I swear I won't—but you must speak a word to give me hope. Poor—I told you how poor I was; and I am poorer now than when I told you, but I am strong and—yes, I am brave. I can face anything. With you—you as my wife, hardships would be only as victories soon to be achieved. Say that you love me—that you will be my wife, and the word hardship will die echoeless, and in

its place, in the dictionary, there will be a drop of blood—my heart's blood—to remain ever fresh —always red. One word."

"I think I hear my aunt coming," said I. And so she was. She came into the room, gave him a frigid bow and sat down. He began to feel about as if for his hat. I wonder why a man seems to feel so much safer when he has his hat in his hand.

"Did you bring a note from Mr. Nevum?" my aunt inquired, clearing her throat.

"Er—no, Madam. I haven't seen him since about noon time."

"I didn't know but he had sent out the little balance due my niece."

"No Madam, he sent nothing by me."

"Has my neice informed you that she has secured a much better place?"

"No, Madam, but I think she was on the point of telling me when you came in."

"Perhaps so. I am very glad she has made the change. I don't think Nevum's office afforded the proper scope for her abilities. Gypsy, you needn't laugh. I am sure of it—have known it from the first. Now in real estate—"

I broke in with an attempted pleasantry. I said that I might be on more rising ground. Edward smiled faintly, but my aunt compressed her lips. "Better ground at any rate," she said. Then she inquired of Edward whether he expected to make his home in Chicago. "It is my intention to enter upon the practice of the law here," he answered. She cleared her throat. Edward felt about as if again he were searching for his hat. I knew that he was in agony, but I could say nothing, do nothing to help him. Muttering that he did not know it was so late he arose and said that he must go. No one had said that it was late. The time had not been mentioned. But the appearance of my aunt, cold and with her mouth drawn, was quite enough to produce any sort of illusion. I wanted to say something to him, not the word he had sworn would make him strong enough to fight against the world and fate combined, but some little word to encourage him, to send him away half happy at least; but my aunt went to the door with us. There was no chance. But he took my hand as if in a friendly good night shake, and I suffered him to hold it until my aunt turned

upon him with a clearing of her throat; and then in submission and with a deep sigh, he took his leave. My aunt closed the front door, locked it, bolted it as if now there were need of double security, and then bade me come into the parlor. I obeyed her, and when she had sat down and smoothed herself out, she said: "And that is the sort of thing you would marry. I tell you he'll starve to death within a year after he's married. Both nature and circumstances have rendered it almost impossible for such a man to live. Don't stand there now and tell me he loves you. Any body can see that. But don't you dare to say that you love him. Well may he have hunger in his eyes. He'll have it all over him before he is done with it. Now don't go away." I had moved toward the door. "I want to talk to you —and for your good."

It is always disagreeable when a relative talks to us for our good, and in my countenance she must have read my impatience. "Ah, is it such a hardship to listen for a few moments?"

I told her no, that it was a pleasure. She didn't clear her throat at me, but she looked and in her look I saw that she knew to what de-

gree I had been untruthful. "I believe that some time ago I told you that I stood in the place of your mother," she said. "But I am going to stand in a manner a little more determined than she stood. You are simply not going to marry that—office boy."

"You are not better apprised of that fact than I am, aunt. I have never thought that I should marry him. I never mused over the possibility of it."

"Gypsy," she said, arising and coming toward me with affection beaming forth from her countenance, "you are a good child; and you will be a comfort to your mother and to me. Good night."

CHAPTER XIX.

WOULD KEEP HIS WORD.

Early on the following day I was assigned to work in the real estate office. And what a change. In the former place my work had been to depress, but here it was to exalt. It was like turning from lugubrious prose to intoxicating lyricism. The company for whom I had engaged to work was enlisted in the inflated endeavor to build a suburban town. Every lot was a miniature Paradise. Every building was a palace. The streets were speedways for the chariots of the gods. To the wondrous advantages of this world my eyes were opened anew.

My "boss," Mr. Roland, was lean, wrinkled, bald, good-toothed, undertakerish in dress and bearing, but his smile was a capitalistic sunrise. And it was when this smile was in the full splendor of its glow that he dictated his letters. I don't know how long it took him to learn my name. I don't suppose he ever did. When

spoken to I was always Miss—Ah—; and when spoken of I was "our young lady." I heard one of the girls ask a co-laborer if the "squeeze" had arrived. I soon learned that she meant the main boss, the dignified head of the entire establishment. He was rarely seen except as he chanced to pass through the low plain of the general office. To be summoned before him was an event in history.

In so far as was possible, I withdrew my mind from everything else and centered it upon my work, soon discovering that my education and my reading, such as they were, contributed in no meager way to my advantage. Once, about the fifth day, when I had completed a long piece of typewriting, almost a pamphlet, Mr. Roland complimented me. His interest in me was stimulated to the extent that he inquired as to my name. I told him; and when, two days later I had acquitted myself with credit, he again inquired my name. For a moment it looked as if he were about to include my address, but as this would have been in the nature of unwarranted flattery, he desisted.

A week passed and I saw nothing of Edward,

but I heard from him, three letters, all about the same, wild out-pourings of his love. My aunt had not given to him the opportunity to ask me for the number of my present place of occupation. He had spent the most of the noon hour in a chance hunt for it, going into numerous buildings, but had not been rewarded. He knew, he admitted, that it would be embarrassing to me to call during business hours, but such was not his intention. He desired simply to know where I was, so that he might watch for me some evening as I came from my duties. "I can see, or at least I strongly suspect, that your aunt doesn't like me," he said. "Therefore it is not well that I should trouble her house with my presence. But she has miscalculated my nature if she thinks that I am going to give you up. If some one else leads you to the altar, I will follow and protest against so inhuman a cruelty. I know that we were born for each other, and now all that remains is for me to convince you of this truth. Won't you please come over to our restaurant? Surely you cannot deny me that small favor—I mean that great favor. Within a few days the Fair will close forever

its now historic gates. Can we not spend an afternoon there? I promise to behave myself. I will so conduct myself that no matter what I feel, no one shall know. Do me this great kindness, please."

It was not only a kindness to him but a pleasure in store for myself, so I appointed a Saturday afternoon. I met him on the lake shore, near the Iowa building, where the sobered waves were murmuring low. The day was warmed as if with a reminiscence of summer. Edward came forward with an autumn leaf in his hand. He begged me to wear it in my hair. I did as he bade me. My silence and my submission to his will lighted his countenance with a sad smile. "Let us walk over yonder where we may be silent—and not heard," he said, with a laugh as melancholy as a sigh. For a long time we walked beneath the trees and amid the shrubbery of the Wooded Island. The music of the Fair was dying. That great strain of former life was now more like a wail. On a bench beneath an umbrella-shaped bush, covered with vines, we sat down. He turned about, toward me, and from his eyes poured something into mine, a spirit, a

passion; and I looked down. No one was near, the world was far away, and he took my hand. My glove was half off. His hand was hot against my palm; but it was a joyous heat, a throbbing life.

"God, how it draws the pain out of my heart," he said. "It is the first moment of ease I have had since—oh, I don't know when! I didn't know that a man could suffer so much and yet continue to live. Gypsy?"

I did not answer him. A breeze was stirring and above our heads the vines murmured hoarsely. A dead leaf fluttered at my feet. A companionless bird flew past, and homeless, perched on the dead branch of a stunted oak.

"Gypsy, did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, I heard you."

"And have you nothing to say?"

"Silence says all, Edward."

"No, it does not say all. It may acknowledge much but can never say enough. I have told you that I more than love you, that I worship you. Without you there would be no universe. God did not complete His work with Adam, with Eve, but with you. Gypsy, do you love me?"

"Don't you know in the restaurant, I told you I did?"

"Then? You merely acknowledged that you cared for me. Merely to care for me—a dew drop in the parching desert. It must be more than that. I don't want you merely to care for me. I wouldn't have your friendship. I want your love—God, if I could have your agonizing love. Nothing else can satisfy me. Gypsy, I am almost mad."

I could well believe it. He trembled violently. His eyes blazed. "Don't tell me that I must not be mad. How can I help it? They say that love is a disease. It is. It is a death by poison. Into my soul you have poured a poison—a sweet but deadly poison. Gypsy!"

"Don't, please. Some one will see us. Remember your promise. Don't you know, you promised to behave yourself. You must. Don't attract attention, please."

"I beg your pardon. I didn't know what I was doing. Half the time now I don't know whether I'm dreaming or awake. Sometimes when I think I'm awake, I'm dreaming. But tell me—do you love me?"

"If you won't ask me anything else I will tell you."

"I will promise. Do you?"

"Yes."

"You have told me. But is it that you just *do* love me?"

"You promised not to ask anything else."

"But you fill my mouth with sweets and tell me not to swallow. You have made me thirstier. I want to feel in here— in my heart that you love me. I want to feel that you would be miserable if I didn't love you. Would you? Tell me that, and I'll swear I won't ask another thing. I swear it, in the presence of God."

"Yes, I should be miserable."

"Do you mean it? Tell me."

"There, you have violated your oath. Don't you see, I can't believe a word you say?"

"I beg your pardon. But you would seal my lips. You would bid me be dumb."

"Let us talk about something else."

"Something else," he repeated. "Is there— can there be anything else? But I will keep my word with you. Yes, if like a fire it slowly burns my heart to ashes, I will keep my word with you.

I will show you that for you I can do anything. These days since you left—I have been insane. Any one could see it. Nevum must have noticed it. That old man who sits out there near my desk, noticed it—spoke about it. He said that his heart had been broken many a time. Many a time! I could have trod him beneath my feet. I told him that no heart could be broken but once. He shook his head and replied, many a time. I replied that vanity might be crushed often, but that the heart had only one life and could suffer extreme punishment but once. I don't see how I could have lived through another day. I couldn't. You don't know—can't know. And now, can there be poverty in the face of such love? So encouraged and so strengthened, can't I arise to achievement? Nothing can hold me to the ground. Gypsy, will you be my wife?"

"Again you have violated your oath. I don't believe you are sincere. How can I? You swear and then prove yourself false. No, you don't love me. If you did, you would keep your word —out of respect for me."

"I beg your pardon—I do on my knees—or should if you'd give your consent. But you tie

my hands with a silken cord and when I flinch with the cutting of the flesh, you censure me. It is cruel, yes; but perhaps it is just. For what should I expect? In this cold age such warmth of love must appear unnatural. But why banquet me and show me the guillotine? Tell me one thing more and—"

"No, nothing more. I have told you too much already."

He sighed. "Yes, it was all a dream. I dreamed you said you loved me. Tell me it wasn't a dream. Tell me this, then—that I dreamed you said you would be my wife. May I with your permission have dreamed that?"

It was more than I could assimilate and I had to laugh. He reproached me, called me heartless, but after a time he insisted that I should give my consent to his dreaming as his fancy might lead him.

"Yes, you may dream that I promised you. But that's all."

"Yes, all. But God, what a relief it is to dream. The world is a dream—all life a dream. But may I awake and find my dream true, may I?"

"You have picked your oath to pieces like a thistle down and have blown it away in the air. No, I will tell you nothing else. You already know too much."

Again he begged my pardon. He said that he would not speak another word that might distress me. But after a few moments he asked me if I would not remain on the Fair grounds with him until after nightfall. He desired the pleasure of walking with me beneath the moon. I told him that there was no moon. This was a hazard on my part. I didn't know whether or not there was a moon.

"No moon!" he said, and I thought that he had entrapped me, but soon he agreed that I must be right. Of late he had noticed neither the sun nor the moon. For him there had not been even a day, but all was a night, dark and full of dreams that wrought upon his soul. "Then you won't stay until after nightfall."

"My aunt would be uneasy about me."

"Is she of so much consequence? Is your whole life to be devoted to her? She has taken up the notion that it is a virtue to oppose me. If

it is family that she means I think I can satisfy her. My family stands above reproach."

"Let us walk about," I said. He objected.

"Oh, no, let us remain here. Over there is the vulgar crowd. Here we are on—the verge of heaven. Wait a moment." I had arisen. "Sit down just for a moment longer."

"No; you have not kept your word with me."

"Now don't torture me. Is it that you delight in my suffering? How can you have the heart?"

"If I can't believe anything you say, how do I know you are suffering?"

"Can't you believe me? I wouldn't tell you a falsehood to save the blood of my heart. I couldn't be untruthful to you. Your eyes draw truth from me—like the sun drawing up the dew."

"The sun dries up the dew. Do my eyes dry up the truth?"

"How can you talk that way? Wait, I will go with you."

For a long time we walked among the "approaching" ruins of the great exhibition. And I soon discovered that it was his study and his aim to draw me into deserted corners where he

might squeeze my hand. To myself I said that I loved him; and it was not perhaps to my credit when I reflected that I should doubtless love him more were he less devoted. In man's indifference there is sometimes a show of strength, and even the weakest of women admire strength. I have often heard it said that a woman loves from the moment when she finds herself loved. Would it not be true also to say that a woman loves less from the moment she finds herself worshiped?

The chill of evening was coming on, breathing down out of the silver sky. The sun was setting. I said that I must go home. He begged for the privilege—the honor and the happiness, he said, of accompanying me nearly to my aunt's house, but this I was compelled to deny him.

"I shall go to my wretched room to dream," he said. "Ah, but you have promised that one of my dreams—the dearest of them all—may become a reality. Do you remember?"

"I remember many things—some of which I ought to forget, perhaps. But your dreams are your own. I cannot forbid them."

"Ah, but surely you wouldn't break your word. No, you can't do that."

"No, I suppose not. That right you reserve for yourself."

"Don't say that. I would die rather than to break my word with you. You told me you loved me. Tell me you still love me—that I have said nothing to cause you to hate me."

"I am just as I was," I said.

He gave me a grateful look, pressed my hand and hastened away. And I—I went home with his words and his eyes in my heart.

CHAPTER XX.

SHE HAD VERSES IN HER EYES.

In the afternoon of the following day—Sunday, I have cause to remember—I was lying in my room trying to read, but with Edward's impassioned countenance between my eyes and the book, when my aunt came with great excitement to inform me that Bayless, the architect, was in the parlor. "He came in a buggy with the finest span of horses you ever saw," she said. "And I know they must belong to him by the way he treats them, and I think he wants you to go driving with him; and if he does, don't you dare to refuse. Hurry along now, and get ready."

She helped me to dress, talking during the time; and at the door as I was going out to the stairs she kissed me, which meant, "Capture him if you can. Remember your mother—and me."

Bayless was dressed as if he expected to pose as a spectacle at a horse-show. No clothed statue could have been more representative of grace. I

caught the gleam of a diamond, and on the lapel of his coat there glowed a golden chrysanthemum. He bowed, and when I extended my hand, he did not take it, but with his fingers nibbled at the tips of my fingers. Had it not been so dignified it would have been laughable. With exquisite grace he sat down, knowing every moment what to do with his hands, his feet, himself. His ease was a study; his little animations, coming slowly, without friction and going the same way, were like the gentle ripples of a pool, breathed upon by gentle breezes.

"I was going to remark," said he, "that I hoped you were well. But we never hope for that of which we are already assured. I see that you are in the best of health."

I caught sight of my aunt moving about noiselessly in the hall. In her countenance I read as plainly as if written, the words: "Did you ever hear the like?"

I replied that I was as well as any one could be, and my aunt nodded approvingly, as if I had uttered a thought concerning which there had been some doubt, but which now was more clear. So satisfied was she that she silently withdrew,

willing to leave the management of the situation to me. As I looked upon this cool and wholly self-possessed man, I wondered whether he could ever have so deeply loved a woman as to tell her as Edward had told me, that he could drop upon his knees and die of happiness at her feet. I smiled to think of it; and Bayless, supposing that I was smiling over a remark he had made, repeated it, the idlest of fancies, a nothing; but a serious man thinks that his nothings are humorous. He said that the day had been glorious, and then softened it with a revision—that it had been charming. Glorious was too rich in color. I spoke of my change of work. He raised his eyebrows, too high at first and then lowered them a trifle.

"It was no doubt well," he said. "The forging of duns is I should think a most depressing occupation," he went on to say, marking off his accents slowly, like a hall clock. "And you are now a land boomer. Very expressive of the real estate business, I am persuaded. My friend Nevum and I are attracted toward each other for the reason, I fancy, that in temperament we are so very far apart. He makes business as serious

as possible, while I touch it as lightly as I can—by which I mean that I do not permit it to weigh heavily upon me."

"But your affairs," said I, "are more related to art than to business."

He gave a slight shrug of the shoulder. I accepted it as a confidence and inclined my head.

"That is very nearly true," he said. "Understand I do not mean that you utter it, believing it to be true only in part, but that you have uttered a fact in so far as you comprehend the situation, or rather I might say, the conditions. In a way, or rather to some degree, my work is art. But even art is necessarily followed by a commercial transaction. It must have its recompense or come to naught. Ah, I have brought my horses. Would you care to drive?"

I thanked him and ran up stairs to get my wraps. My aunt was in the hall above. She seized me as if I had won some sort of victory. "Perfectly charming," she whispered.

It was a delight to speed behind horses "that almost disdained the ground." Bayless spoke to them as gently as if talking to a child. We passed

everything in Michigan avenue and then turned for a leisurely drive in Washington Park.

"Oh," said my companion, "you doubtless recall that I spoke to you of a picture—the one that resembles you."

"Yes, I have thought of it a number of times."

"Ha, you have honored it with a frame set in diamonds. Ho, boys."

It was a compliment to address me and the horses almost in the same breath.

"Yes, the picture," he added. "I have thought more of it since I discovered the resemblance."

"That is a higher compliment than I could have paid it," said I; and he turned his eyes toward me, and how cool they were, how different from Edward's fire.

"Yes, you shall see it—sometime. What were you doing when I called? It must have been that you were reading poetry, for when you came down there were verses in your eyes."

The prettiness of this speech, the softness with which it was uttered, tingled me—it made me catch my breath as we do when swinging.

"I had been trying to read verses."

"Ah! I thought so. May I ask whose?"

"Yes, and when I tell you, you may not approve. Byron's."

"Ah, he wrote in sunsets and punctuated with the stars. Approve? Not for some, perhaps—but for you—well, you are strong."

"But I don't feel strong when I read him. His power makes me weak. I like to feel that he has conquered me."

He spoke to his horses. He whistled inwardly. "Byron is not my favorite poet," said he, slowly, as if he had been called upon to pronounce a judgment. "In him there is an unquestioned splendor, but he dazzles too much. Ah, let me say that I prefer wine. He is brandy."

"Perhaps that is the reason I prefer him—for quick intoxication," I replied; and again he slightly turned his eyes toward me.

"Very good; very."

We drove in silence for a long time. The gardeners were digging up the roots of flowers to store them away from the coming blasts of winter. The birds were all of them gone.

"I have schooled myself," he said; "yes, and yet I like to contemplate an unschooled woman—one who gives rein to her prancing emotions.

It is picturesque. Some persons, both men and women, begin to school their temperaments before they discover that they have any—any of decided characteristics. It is well to permit them to reach a full state of development and then to begin the proper restraint. The experience is something worth and the victory is more of an achievement. You are young. I am entering the forties. But I shall not presume to tell you what poets you ought to read. The poet we read because we feel constrained to, makes no impression. Quickened water catches more of the different hues of the sky—flowing emotions seize upon more of the different phases of life."

He was not wholly clear, but he seemed to mean what he said and I was pleased to listen to him. Was it his reading or was it his manner, coming upon him unconsciously, that had subdued him into a moralist? Desiring to leave with him a good impression I could not be frank. There was something I must hide, and for the first time, I began to weigh a thought before uttering it. I desired his respect.

"I haven't said that Byron is my favorite," I remarked. "There are greater and more en-

nobling poets. Byron is the poet of moods—of rebellious moods, I might say."

"Rebellious moods. Then were you a rebel this afternoon?"

I had not been a rebel; I had been in submission, feeling that Edward possessed me and that I had not striven against the importunities of his passion. But to Bayless I replied that I had been a rebel, that I was in rebellion against the discriminations of life.

"Ah," he said, "that comes with every new awakening along the road of life. The greed of one generation becomes the injustice of a generation that must follow. It is with ease that we find the faults of life, but it were the task of a god to correct them. With each one of us there lies a duty. And that duty is, to make as much as possible of—self. And I must say something to you which no doubt has been uttered a thousand times—that you are fitted to adorn. Frankly—and I am not given to confidences—you are out of place in an office. They tell us that work is ennobling. Some sorts of work are ennobling—for man. But for woman—the home, society. I may go further and say that I

don't believe you ought to be the wife of a mere business man."

"I don't know that I ought to be the wife of any one."

"Oh, yes, of the right sort of a man."

When a man speaks thus he always means that he is the right sort. "You owe it to yourself to develop your faculties," he went on. "As the wife of a mere business man this opportunity would not be afforded you. Such an aim can be attained only through proper companionship. You should marry your equal intellectually."

"Or, superior," I said, laughing.

He took it seriously. "Well, yes, that would be better. Some one to develop you."

"To develop me toward what?"

"A very sensible question. Toward the completion, I might say, of your mind."

"And then to take that mind into society? It would there be companionless."

"Ha, that was very shrewdly put. And, in it there is more than a basis of truth. Still it devolves upon her to develop her mind." He wandered off upon his travels in Europe, spoke of brilliant women whom he had met, of Madam

Patti and her castle in Wales. And I listened, for he was interesting—too precise, a polite guide book; but I enjoyed his recital. As we were nearing my aunt's house he said: "I have greatly enjoyed this drive. And now that we are so well acquainted, you might look for me almost at any time. Would such an understanding be agreeable to you?"

"Perfectly," I answered. When he had helped me out I invited him to take dinner with us, but with one of his model bows he thanked me and declined.

CHAPTER XXI.

SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY.

Dinner was ready but my aunt delayed the meal; and drawing me into her room she insisted upon my going over all that had been said during the drive. She was delighted. "Not in my recollection has there been so fine an opportunity opened for a girl—of modest pretentions," she said. "I must write to your mother this very night. Oh, I just know he is—what do you call it? A paragon among men? He can't help but be. My, such manners. He seems to have come out of a different world from ours. And how thoughtful of you not to have married that Pague. Why, there's no comparison—none whatever."

"But aunt, he hasn't asked me to marry him."

She looked as if I had offended her. "There you go," she said, "jumping at conclusions." It did not occur to her that she herself had made the leap. "Hasn't asked you to marry him—no,

but he will. Didn't he bring his best horses, the very flower of his stable? Didn't he tell you how fitted you were to adorn a home? Such men aren't idle, my dear. They know the value of words and don't waste them. Compare him with that fumbler—that What's-his-name. You can't, that's all. Coal bills! I warrant you he's never compelled to think about them. And winter coming on, too."

Poor woman. Coal bills were the distresses of her life. The winter was one long torture. The first snow flake was a summon to shiver and to dread.

"But tell me this," she said, taking my cheeks between her hard hands and gazing into my eyes. "Tell me that if he, or rather when he does ask you to be his wife—that you will not wound his great heart by even appearing to refuse the honor. Tell me that you will marry him. Tell me that and I shall be happy."

"But I can't tell what I may say. He shall know that I appreciate the honor, but I can't—I can't hear his words, I can't see him. Wait."

"Then I must leave it all with you."

She withdrew, not satisfied but, with hope in

her eyes. And that night, unable to sleep, I strove to picture this coming event, to hear his words and my answer; but Edward's pleading rang like wild music in my ears, and in the dark I could see his countenance aflame with love.

Next day I was honored. Shortly after entering the office Mr. Roland said to me: "Our manager is going to St. Louis to investigate and report upon the condition of our branch interests in that city. He will in addition to his private secretary take with him a young woman typewriter. You have been selected. You will doubtless be gone a week."

He did not inquire as to whether or not I should like to go. But I was not unwilling and I bowed, with so exact an imitation of him that had he not been blinded by business dignity he could have seen it. Shortly afterward the great man, our manager, sent for me. As I was going into his room, several of the girls looked up with envy in their eyes. The manager did not explain. He commanded. I was to be ready within two hours. So I hastened home to prepare for the journey. My aunt was much excited. "It shows that you are preferred above all of the others,"

she said. "And you are to go with the manager! Don't lose sight of that fact, my dear. He is unquestionably a man of great affairs. Do you know whether or not he is a widower?"

"I don't know anything about him. His gruffness would argue that his wife is living."

"Oh, you mustn't talk that way. Men of affairs can't smile always, you know. Why, that's one of the biggest land companies in the world, and I warrant you the president of the United States doesn't get any bigger salary. Well, now, get ready as quickly as you can—and be just as nice to him as possible."

"I'll do my work as well as I can."

"Yes, but don't lose sight of the fact that he is the manager. Such opportunities as are coming your way, I declare! Well, they come and they go, remember that."

I was gone more than a week. The work was hard. The manager was gruff and exacting. Sometimes his words seemed to be rheumatic. He had no sentiment that could not be footed up and set down in figures. To him I did not speak an unnecessary word. Except by my work he had no means of discovering whether I had any

sense. I am sure that aside from my duties he did not care. As we were returning, and just before we left the train, he came to me and said: "I wish to thank you for your efficiency. You have done well."

His secretary, an old maid, a relation raked out of the autumn woods of some far distant territory, caught her breath. When he had passed on down the aisle she said: "My, it's the first time I ever knew him to flatter any one. You must feel quite proud."

As soon as I had entered the door at home my aunt rushed upon me with the question: "What did he say?"

I told her. "But you don't mean that he said nothing more."

"All he said except on business."

"Didn't he express an opinion on any subject?"

"Except as to the matter that called him there he was deaf, dumb and blind."

"But his wife? Did you find out anything about her?"

"I learned nothing whatever about his family —and if you will permit me to say it, I don't care

to know. I would rather walk to the altar with the multiplication table."

"Well, never mind, I'll find out. There are several letters up stairs for you."

The first letter I took up was from mother. My aunt had written to her and she was now congratulating me upon a "chance which should not be viewed lightly." She said that to throw myself away would be the most shameless of ingratitude. "After all we have done for you," she went on. "If so much money had not been expended on your education I might now be living in comfort, but I felt that my first duty was to you, and it remains for you to prove whether or not I was wrong. If that great man should ask you to marry him and you decline the honor, it will break my heart. Let me again say that no matter how much you love a poor man you cannot afford to marry him. Love is an illusion. Remember that. It cannot last long. On this earth there is no greater sham than what is known as home life. It is said that the American home is the most miserable of all homes; and Americans more than any other people marry for what they foolishly regard as love. Ask any

woman who married for love and she will, if she tells the truth, admit the shallowness of it all. Marry that man and model yourself to suit him. This is the wife's duty. They may talk about her independence and rights, but she has none. But she has a duty which she owes to herself and that is to be taken care of. Remember this —to be cared for and supported. What could prompt this letter except the deepest love for you? Yes, you have another duty and it is this— not to break my heart."

There were three other letters, all from Edward. They read as if they might have been written in an asylum where love-maniacs are confined. But in their very wildness they were sweet and delicious—strawberries that grow along the margin of the hill-side rivulet. "Night after night have I stood in the street, gazing at your house," he said in one of his outbursts. "I did not know your window but I knew the walls and I worshipped them. Once I thought to set the place afire, that I might save you—that I might press you to this bursting heart and then perish in the flames. The countenance of your aunt, the time when she followed us into the hall, afraid

that we might look a good night into each other's eyes, proved to me that she was my enemy; and knowing this, I would not embarrass you by knocking at the door. But I ask you, Universe, Heaven, if you are going to permit her to destroy two lives. Remember, you told me that if you thought that I did not love you it would mean misery for you. Are you going to permit this? I know that it is only my poverty that gives her cause to dislike me. But do we not set our love, inspired as it is, above all money? If money brought happiness the richest people would be the happiest. If wealth nourished love, then there would be no divorces among the rich. But the most miserable man in the world, the most wretched woman in the world, is the man or woman with a disease beyond the reach of money —the disease of the soul. If you do not marry me, you blast my life and curse your own. This, in letters of blood, is written in the book of fate. Write to me. Send me the one word—Love. That one word alone is the message that God would flash forth to the universe. It is the word of all life. Send it me that I may live."

The next letter, taken up not following time

or date, but just as it came to hand, contained these words: "You continue to be silent. In the night my heart moans, and when the sun arises it has not turned from its grief. The feet of time have been shod in lead and heavily they drag along. But why should I wish for time to speed, since one day is as the dreary one that went and halted and died before? There is no time. All is stagnation."

Then, another: "I have found out where you work and I learned with some little relief that you were out of town. Relief? Yes, for it showed that you had not been neglectful of my letters. But why, no matter where you are, haven't you written to me? Didn't your soul tell you that I must have written and that I was suffering for a word? As soon as you have read this, write. Don't wait a moment."

I wrote. It was in my heart to tell him that I loved him. But something else was in my mind and my wanton heart refused to tell him that I would be his wife. I had run away from my mother but I was not yet beyond her influence. I believed that in her letter she had told

me a truth. Without comforts there could be no home. Poverty supplied no comforts.

It was evening. I stole out to post the letter to Edward. My aunt awaited my return. She asked me if I had gone out to post a letter to my mother. To avoid an argumentI answered that I had. She asked me what I had written. "I know what her letter contained almost as well as if I had read it," she said. "She told you what reason demanded that you should do. What have you told her?"

"That I should do what reason saw fit to demand."

She smiled; she embraced me

CHAPTER XXII.

HAD BEEN FROZEN.

The next day at noontime when I went down out of the office, Edward was waiting for me. He came forward with more of reserve than I should have expected, and shook hands in quite a friendly and uncompromising manner. "I insist upon you taking lunch with me," he said; and without waiting to receive a negative or any other sort of answer, he proceeded to lead the way. I did not object. We went to "our old restaurant," as he termed it, and sat down at our old table. In Chicago, history gathers rapidly.

"I suppose you have observed that I am striving to be sane today," said he.

"You are so sane that I hadn't noticed the effort."

"But it has been an effort just the same. You may, however, feel perfectly free."

We gave our orders and then he continued: "Your letter did me a world of good. As I have

heard drunkards say, upon receiving money for a drink, you saved my life. But you failed to answer the vital question. Did you know that?"

I pretended that I did not know there was a vital question to be answered. "Yes, there was," said he. "You did not say that you would marry me."

"Don't you know I reminded you once that this was not the place for the discussion of certain subjects?"

"Yes, I remember. But there seems to be no place. Your aunt doesn't want me to come to her house. Does she?"

"Well, I haven't heard her say that she—wanted you. She is a peculiar woman."

"Let us say, rather, that she is a very natural woman. She objects to me on superficial grounds—my poverty. She knows nothing whatever of my character, and hasn't taken the trouble, I fancy, to guess at my abilities. But has she said that she doesn't wish me to come to her house?"

"We must not discuss her."

"Then she has expressed herself freely?"

"She is a woman of opinions and generally expresses them."

"Yes, I know—knew all about it from the first. I felt it. But is there any place where we may meet of an evening? When I come back from—oh, I haven't told you that I am ordered out of town. Yes, I am. Nevum has commissioned me to go to St. Paul to attend to some business for him, and I shall be gone perhaps a month. God, what an eternity. But there is money in it—business, as they say; and it will enable me to approach nearer my own office, twentieth story, skylight. I am to start this evening and that is the reason why I was so determined to see you today. And are you going to let me depart without any definite hope?"

"The waiter is coming," I replied. When the dishes had been set down Edward returned to the subject. "Answer one question and I will not ask another."

"That is what you said at the Fair, but forgot it in a moment."

"If I did it was love that caused it. And love may not only sanctify lying but even theft—murder." He leaned over and whispered:

"Will you marry me?"

"Hush, I'm sure every one in the restaurant hears you."

"No one hears me—not even you. But tell me that you will and send me away happy. Would you deny a morsel to a starving man? Is it so hard to speak one word?"

"I cannot tell you now. It is not because I don't care for you—I do; I see your eyes constantly before me. I hear your words, and strains of music, in the street, as I pass a house—in strains of music I hear your voice. I am frank with you. I owe you the truth—but that is all. I will make you no promise; but when you return I will then tell you—whether or not I can marry you. You must not urge me. Remember that I too may have my troubles. In the glorious selfishness of love don't forget that other hearts might ache. I have already told you more than I have had cause to tell any other man. You must not urge me."

"You have told me much and I thank God for it. I believe you, and yet I am constantly haunted by the fear that you regard my character as weak. My love has so overpowered me that I *am* weak. Incapable of showing to you

what I am, I must appear to you a helpless man, struggling. I have reached that stage where words fail me. Emotion has drowned them. But you shall see me come out of this fever strong and devoted. Still you will not speak that one word."

"If you wrench it from me it were worthless."

"A phrase. You can remember them. I can't. I know not how to turn off something with a sentence remembered. I grope in the dark, ready to bump against a post. You carry a light. My lamp is smothered. But I shall urge you no more. Your words—precious words—I shall take with me. They are already engraven on my heart. And when I return——"

"I will tell you."

His love was stronger than his character, I thought as I looked at him, listened to him; and though at times words seemed to have forsaken him, yet he was more eloquent than a poem of strange and unexpected phrases. The warmth of his blood appeared to have crisped his hair. I fancied that if he should kiss me—it would burn. When he looked into my eyes, every sense

within me quickened. A warmer blood flowed into my very toes. The ground was baking. It was the cry of nature.

We parted as we had met, without demonstration. I went to the office heavy of heart. If I had discovered a weakness in his character, that weakness appealed to me. I resolved to marry him. So that was settled. The battle was at an end. But when I went home—when I saw my aunt, the fight was renewed. The sight of her brought back all of the weakness—permit me to term it weakness—of my education and training. Edward had said: "But you shall see me come out of this fever strong and devoted." Come out of this fever—*fever*. Then he must himself feel that it could not last. I was in love with his delirium and not with him. With my head almost bursting I went to my room. My aunt came to me and urged me to tell her my trouble. I told her that my head ached.

"Oh, but there is something else," she persisted. "Haven't you seen that fellow that works for Nevum?"

"Yes, I have seen him. But what of that?"

"A great deal of it, I'll tell you, my dear. I

was afraid those letters were from him. He has asked you to marry him. Gypsy, don't try to deceive me. You know I would do anything in this world for you. You know that when you are asleep I am thinking of your interest. So, don't try to mislead me. What did you tell him?"

"I did not tell him I would."

"Of course you didn't; you are a sensible girl. He's got a fever now but it will pass off. It always does."

Fever! How did she know? Were all of them, she and my mother and the Peytons—were they wise and I the fool?

"You did not tell him you would. But have you any intention of marrying him?"

"No, I haven't. I shall do as you and my mother compel me."

She kissed me.

In the dead of the night I sat by the window. In the moon, laced over with filmy clouds, I sought to read my fate. The voice of the wind moaned in mockery. I went to bed, dozed and dreamed of rags and poverty. I saw a coffin and I inquired as to who was enshrouded there-

in, and an old woman mumbled, "Love." I saw a strong man, raving, and some one said: "His fever is passing. Soon he will be cold." From these horrors I awoke. The sun was shining. At the window a belated bird was twittering.

At the breakfast table I read another letter from my mother. Inclosed was a message from Samuel, my stepfather. "There was a time when I advised you to act as your heart dictated," said he. "But the heart of the wise and experienced is not always a sure guide. Then what shall we expect from the heart of the young and inexperienced? In the matter that now confronts you, follow the voice of your mind. Perhaps your mother is right. What can man hope for when woman says that love does not endure?"

My mother wrote the same as before. She implored me not to break her heart. She said nothing concerning the breaking of my own. The letter contained a piece of news: "It is now about a week since Pague was taken down with pneumonia. For several days there has been no marked change in his condition, but the doctor says that his age is against his chances of recovery. Olive sits by him night and day. Some

times in his delirium he talks about Cousin George. His mind seems to wander back to the days of his youth. His remembered cousin has no doubt been dead many a year. He has never told Olive anything about him. Poor child, she is overcome with grief. She declares he is the best and tenderest man that ever lived. I know that her married lfe has been happy. I wish to impress this upon your mind."

At the office a letter from Edward was waiting for me. I could see and feel that he was struggling to restrain his impetuous pen. Occasionally there was a reflection of common sense. "All of my plans are centered upon you," he said. "Within a short time I shall apply for the privilege of beginning my starvation period at the law. The practice is not what it used to be, the epitome of statesmanship; but it continues to offer advantages broader and deeper than those of any other profession. My instructors have complimented me upon my clearness and enthusiasm. These two elements are the corner stones of success. Perhaps I might do better in some new town, in the West. Think it over, please. You see, I am taking it for granted that

you are to speak that one life-giving word. It will not be a banishment to go into some new community. They may banish pride and wealth, but love unless torn asunder, cannot be banished."

I wrote to him with more of mind than of heart. When such a condition exists, the soul is in rebellion.

In the afternoon there came a note, by messenger boy. It was from Bayless. He asked me to go to the theatre with him that night. He would call, with a carriage. I answered that I should be pleased to accept his invitation. Of course my aunt was delighted. "And in a carriage," she said. I waited for her to say something about "affairs," but finding no place for the word, she asked to see the note. "How beautifully he writes," she went on. "My! It looks like an engraving. There is no mistaking his character, my dear. There isn't a kink in it."

Among our boarders there were four women, detestable creatures, for the most part—prying, snobbish; and when the carriage arrived they were greatly excited. I knew that they were

peeping from every available corner. The first sight of Bayless as he entered the door, elated me. He looked like the picture of a grand duke I remembered having seen away back, during my royalty-worshipping childhood. He bowed, took more of my hand than he had ever done before, released it slowly, with a slight nibble at the tips of the fingers. I had dressed with every possible care, and in his eyes I saw the flame of admiration. Love would have disturbed him too much. A diamond gleamed at me. Into the carriage he helped me with courtly grace, and then got in, to shed a twilight of dignity. He began to talk of the theater. He had seen all of the great personages of the stage, at least those of his own generation; and it seemed to me that his criticisms were worthy of a place in dramatic literature. He must have committed to memory all of the "don'ts" that the rhetoricians print in their books; and if one word were accented more than another, it was when he avoided some popular error of speech. Purist in manner, word and dress, he put me to the strain of studied demeanor. But he said that he liked my naturalness, my frankness of opinion. Sometimes, for-

getting myself, I talked naturally. His laughter was as cool as the breeze that came through the lowered window.

"I have something to tell you concerning my friend, Nevum," said he. I was thinking of him, of the difference between the two men. I evinced no interest. I said, Yes?

"He is going to marry a charming young widow. He came to me yesterday and remarked that the ambition of his life was about to be attained. The only woman whom he had ever loved had consented to be his wife. I had seen her, with him, once at church—had been presented to her, in fact; and I recalled not indeed her features but her general manner—lively, but unnecessarily given to those—what shall I term them? To those little suddennesses that attract attention—ah, I might say, action in repose. I thought that he was much taken with you."

I thought that with the last remark he had permitted some little feeling to escape and to be borne away upon his words. I admitted that Nevum had manifested an interest in me. "Ah, I thought so. In fact he told me, or at least hinted that you had been offered the opportunity

to become Mrs. Nevum." Again he laughed, and the breeze through the window was cooler. "Ah, you did not care for him?"

"I couldn't."

"He did not interest you?"

"He couldn't."

"Very succinctly expressed, I assure you. No, he is not the man to inspire a refined woman. He has the lawyer's shrewdness—the half-true philosophy of his profession, but his sentiment is but a well-turned phrase. If, when it has been uttered, and the sound of it pleases him, he attempts to maintain it as a principle. But, upon the other hand, if he does not like it himself, when it has been spoken as an experiment, he laughs it off and searches among his old saws for a brighter instrument. Do you remember a young man who works for him—Edward—Somers, I think? Do you recall him?"

"Oh, yes." And now my heart began to beat wildly. "But I think he's gone away."

"Ah? I had not heard so. During the harder part of his struggles I gave him such work as he could do, in my office. Finally, I recommended him to Nevum. It is the desire of his

parents that he should become a lawyer; but I regard it an error of fondness rather than a foresight arising from judgment. In Italy he might have become a painter; in Paris, a dramatist; in London a reform preacher; in Berlin a composer; but in America——"

"What?" I inquired.

"A failure," he replied. "Birds are hatched out of season, and men are sometimes born out of all time and out of all country. I once knew a young fellow who was born in Spain, who lived in France, Germany, Russia, and who finally had no language, but a smattering of many. He would have been happier and more useful as a plowman in one land. Edward possesses a little of nearly everything. His is an iridescent temperament. He reminds me of a grand passion that ends in a sob."

"Why have you so—sentenced him?" I inquired.

Was the breeze stronger or had he laughed again?

"Because Nevum told me that he was infatuated with you."

I laughed. "And is it not something to have

infatuated a painter in Italy, a dramatist in Paris, a reform preacher in London and a composer in Berlin?"

And now his laugh was real and not so cold. "Oh, yes," he said, "I might term it a multitudinous victory. But seriously—ah, will you be serious for a moment?"

"Yes, as serious as the—the label on a poison bottle."

"A shuddering comparison, but it will serve."

"I am listening."

"Ah, I hope I do not presume——"

"You do not."

"Then you embolden me to say that as his wife you would be miserable."

"And if not until then, perhaps I shall be happy."

"By which you mean that——"

"That I am not to be his wife."

"Ah, and so I told Nevum. Permit me—again without presumption—to say that I congratulate your good sense."

The spirit of my mother was with me. And as I alighted from the carriage, I felt that I had

sprung out not upon the ground but upon Edward's heart.

The play did not interest me. It was a farce comedy. But what was that one note in all this ribaldry to claim a moment of my attention? It was a mockery of love. A painted thing scoffed at the human heart. But I laughed.

On the way home I was gay. Beneath my feet was a heart. But it was not warm. It had been frozen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN A BLACK SKY.

When the carriage drew up at my aunt's door, I remembered that the conversation had been trivial. I had laughed a great deal. I was still laughing. Bayless seemed warmer. Or was it I who was colder? He held my hand for a moment. I felt that he would draw me toward him. "This is a night that I shall remember," he said.

"And so shall I."

"You have caused me to forget unpleasant things," he said. "And for this I thank you. Good night."

My aunt was waiting for me. I threw off my cloak with a laugh. She said that I must be happy. I told her that I was. "What has passed?" she inquired.

"Time—that is all."

"But didn't he——"

"No, but he will. It is coming."

"And you will accept?"

"Yes!" I screamed and ran up the stairs.

She followed me. "I am going to write to your mother tomorrow. Shall I tell her you are happy?"

"Yes, so happy."

"But you don't talk like it."

"But haven't I said it? What more can you ask? Tell her that her spirit is with me."

"Yes, my dear, I will. Don't you think the room is cold? There's not enough steam on, is there?"

"I thought it was an oven. I must have more air."

"But don't raise that window. You'll take your death of cold. Lower it just a little from the top. Wait, I'll fix it."

The air was stifling. My aunt kissed me and went out. The air was better. I looked at myself in the glass, standing half disrobed. "Hypocrite," I said. "You have no character. You are a smile, glittered over with deceit. You are going to sell yourself. The bidder is respectable, but are you? You once asked, 'What is virtue?' I will tell you. It is something you do not pos-

sess. You have not fallen but you are preparing to fall. A painter in Italy—dramatist in Paris! Ah, what would you have been in Babylon?"

In the morning there came a letter from my mother. Old Pague was dead. Why did she hasten to write to me? His mind wandered to the verge of death and he had babbled, not of green fields, but of "Cousin George." And I had been a party to this deception. Age was his crime; affection his weakness—trustfulness his idiocy. Olive was heartbroken. Yes, I knew that. Her appearance of sorrow was remorse. "But I am following you," I said. "You were weak enough to be driven and I am not strong enough to resist. Over my head there is a silver hammer. It will fall."

At the office—there was Edward's letter. He had been disturbed by dreams. So had I. But he did not believe that they could be true. I did. He had an ideal—virtue. He might not live up to it, but he worshiped it; and I was that ideal. His fever, if such it was, might pass, but in his mind he would hold me, the image of his devotion. For himself he had constituted a religion.

For myself there was none. While professing Christ I had turned from love.

At noontime I went to "our restaurant." At "our" table I sat and mused. Coming out I said to myself: "What is the use? Why should I continue to fight when I have already acknowledged defeat?"

After this I felt stronger. It was because I was weaker—because I had completely surrendered. Two days passed. There came a letter from Olive. Her husband had been buried. She thought that a visit to me might help her. I did not care to see her. I wrote at once, telling her not to come—that I should be away, on business. How anxious she was to flee from his grave.

In the evening, I sat with my aunt in the parlor. She asked me if Bayless had written. I told her no, and she said that it was strange that I had not heard from him. "But I warrant you the other man—that Edward has written. Hasn't he?"

"Yes, there comes a letter from him every day."

"But you must encourage him to write. Do you answer his letters?"

"Not all of them."

"What do you say when you write?"

"I don't tell him that I shall be his wife."

The door bell rang. Aunt hastened out. I heard a voice. Bayless had come. "Gypsy is in the parlor. Walk in."

He entered, hesitated, bowed; and I gave him my hand. He sat down near me. Silence. I heard my aunt going up the stairs. She halted as if to listen. He spoke of the weather. He disliked a winter in Chicago. I heard my aunt, going on up the stairs. His voice was a symphony. I recognized its chords but its harmonies could not be caught. Edward was a melody. I could *hum* him. For a long time he talked on downy subjects. A puff and they were gone. "Today I couldn't work—couldn't read," he said. "Shall I tell you what kept me from working and reading? I was reviewing my life. It was not marked by achievement. But it was not a failure, as I viewed it. Except—except that I had not found a companion—a ray of light to illumine my soul."

It was coming. I looked down. His voice grew softer.

"Once I was engaged to marry." I looked up and quickly he added: "For a short time. The woman, older than myself, had not indeed charmed me, but had attracted me with her social graces and the literary finish of her conversation. But I could get literature from books. I desired something which the library could not furnish."

Was there ever such a prelude to a proposal?

"I don't think that her heart was touched. Suitability engages the heart—in the best way. Then surely she was not suitable. One night we talked it over and I offered to emancipate her and she accepted freedom with a readiness that was not wholly a compliment."

He was smiling.

"Since then I have gone in society somewhat, it is true, but I have formed no attachments. That is, not until I met you. I hope I do not embarrass you."

"No, sir," I murmured.

"I thank you. I am a believer in the fitness of things. I believe that happiness is not a passion so much as it is an arrangement, an understanding. They tell us of the dullness of married life, of the lack of interest that follows the honey-

moon. It is nearly always because the proper selection was not made, the correct arrangement formulated. You are a woman of whom I could be proud. I spoke to you once of your fitness to adorn a home. I can supply that home, and I ask that you may adorn it. I do not press you now for an answer. It is something for you to consider. But if you have had similar thoughts concerning me and can answer me to-night, I shall deem it a favor. This is a plan I have in view. My reference to my dislike of a winter here was not idle. I intend a trip to Europe, at the earliest time within the province of convenience, and thence to the Nile, where, as you must know, the rigors of winter may be escaped."

There may have been such proposals. Out of no experience can there arise a proper forecast for the eccentric mind, the course it may pursue, the odd turns it may take in either business or marriage—perhaps the same thing. Romance has its customs, love its well-worn paths. But what shall I say of this offer, the offer which I had been taught to believe was one dictated by common sense? I had thought that he might betray some little emotion, that he might hint

at his love for me. But he did not. He sat placidly waiting for my answer. He did not tell me to take my time, to pronounce each syllable correctly, but his manner seemed to advise it.

"Do you think that I am the woman to make you happy?" I inquired, looking earnestly at him; and without a change of countenance he answered: "I am quite sure of it. And it should be my aim to render you happy. We have intellectual tastes in common. We should be companions, respecting each other's differences of opinion. I should not attempt to subvert your mind, the extinguishment of so many women. As far as possible you should retain your own individuality. Does this seem to meet with your view?"

"Yes, but do you think that I am worthy of such a confidence?"

"If I did not think so I should not have entered into particulars."

"But," I persisted, "isn't there some danger that—I hardly know how to say it."

"Oh, have no hesitation."

"Well, then, you have no fear that you might,

in the future, meet some woman—might fall in love with some one?"

He smiled upon me. "I offer you everything. There would be nothing left to bestow upon another woman."

What an acknowledgment. Was he about to make love to me?

Yes, he was. He took my hand and held it, but that was all. "Am I to have your answer now or must I wait?" he inquired, and his tones were as soft as the cooing of a dove—but as cool as the flutter of a fish. I could not help admiring him. He did everything, said everything, with such grace.

"You shall have my answer now. I will be your wife."

The word "wife" startled me. My face burned.

As I remember it, he thanked me. He said that he would send me the details of his European tour. "Our marriage should not be deferred more than three weeks," said he. "This is hasty, I know, but steamships don't wait. Neither do seasons. The winter will soon be upon us. It is not a pleasant time to cross the sea, but that must

not stand in our way." He arose, looked at me, into my eyes; he took my hand and touched it with his lips.

My aunt was waiting for me. "Has——"

"Yes," I said.

"Oh, and you are engaged?"

"Please leave me to myself."

"But, dear, won't you let me congratulate you?"

"Not to-night. Please leave me."

She withdrew. I went to the window and looked upward. There was no veiled moon in which to search for my fate. I read it in a black sky.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TO DEVELOP A TALENT.

It was a long night. The dawn hung like a pall. I had thought that the fight would be easier. Long ago I had decided that it was finished. But it was not my own virtue that must needs be overcome. It was my love for Edward. At last, however, I said to myself that this, too, was dead. Now nothing remained except a determination to do my duty.

When I went forth from the house everything looked different. Upon the world I seemed to turn a "mind of vast experience." Things in the office appeared changed. The men were older, the girls more careworn. Mr. Roland complimented me upon my freshness. How unconscious an irony! I thought to tell him of the withdrawal of my services, but decided to wait until I should receive the "letter of specification." It was waiting for me when I returned home in the evening. We were to be married three weeks

from that day. As it was his desire to avoid all possible notice, the ceremony was to be performed at home. My aunt stood near me as I read the letter. I handed it to her and she gulped it with her eyes.

"But how can I get ready in so short a time?" I inquired of her.

It was some moments before she answered me. To her the letter was delicious. "Now don't begin to find fault," she replied. "Such haste in a man is always a good sign. It is the way he expresses his love. It means more than if said in words. It means that your outfit will be bought for you in Paris. All you now need are a few traveling dresses. They can be got ready without delay. Oh, what a fortunate girl!"

How willing one woman is to help another woman violate her own soul. "I will leave it all in your hands," said I; and in her gratitude she kissed me. "It is not necessary that you should work another day," she said. "You have some money coming to you. Go down to-morrow morning, and—discharge yourself. Oh, by the way, did Nevum ever settle up with you?"

"No. I suppose he forgot it."

"Forgot it the cat's foot. Go right out and put the account into the hands of some bad debt collector. No, don't do that. He was kind enough to——"

"Ask me to marry him," said I, expecting her to smile, but she didn't. She took it in all seriousness. "Yes, that is quite true," she said. "I suppose it did escape his mind. The reason I spoke of money just at this time was because I wondered if it wouldn't be the proper thing to have your mother come. She could take back glowing reports with her, you know. But then I will write to her and tell her all about it."

This was a decision that my mother was not to be present. And to speak the truth, I agreed with it heartily. It was the only heartiness that I had felt. I was willing enough to communicate to her the fact that I had obeyed my teaching and had sold myself, but I did not wish her to witness the transfer.

Mr. Roland was much astonished when I told him that I was to quit his office. He offered to show me into the manager's room, as a bribe against my determination to quit, and while appreciating the honor, I was forced to decline it.

So I received what little money was coming to me and went out—free, I was going to say, but out into the air of approaching slavery would be nearer the truth. But what was this I carried in my hand? A letter from Edward—unopened, dumbly reproaching me. I was determined not to read it, and yet I knew that I would, on the car; and I did. He begged for more encouragement. In my next letter I must tell him without reservation that I loved him. I could do that. I must tell him, also, that I would marry him. Slowly I tore the letter into bits. When I got off the car, I sowed them in the wind.

Honor dictated a letter to Edward. I wrote it, but could not send it. I felt that he would rush home and create a scene. That something which I had accepted as common sense suggested that as a duty due to myself I should deceive him further. I would tell him nothing about my approaching marriage. But silence would tell him enough, and therefore I must keep up a pretense of "fidelity." This was not easy, but it must be done. So that night I wrote to him. My letter was mainly a string of verses, quotations that like silken threads ran through my memory.

My mother wrote her delight. There was just a little whimper that she had not been urged to attend the wedding. However, she was thankful to know that I was happy. Nothing had been said about happiness, but my aunt had "stressed" the fact that Bayless was rich, and this meant everything, including my happiness. One evening aunt remarked that she didn't see what had become of the time. I had seen; it had died and was still dying by inches. But when I hinted as much, she rebuked me. "Why," said she, "there's not a girl in this town that's as happy as you ought to be. Just note with what envy every one in this house looks on you. But of course from your point of view no one in this house amounts to anything—now."

"Why now?" I inquired.

"Oh, well, you know. Now let me see, are there any friends you wish to ask to the wedding?"

"I have no friends. I am a stranger here."

She sighed and compressed her lips. "Friends here mean money here," she said. After a few moments she inquired: "What has become of

that young man—the one that came to see you? That Edward. What has become of him?"

"He will not be here."

"So much the better," she said. "He is just about foolish enough to make trouble."

"I don't see how he could."

"Oh, he'd find a way. A man always does when he thinks a woman loves him. Young men are so presumptuous. Look at one of them and he believes you are in love with him." The door bell rang. "That must be Mr. Bayless," she said, springing up in a flutter of excitement. It was Bayless. I had half expected him and more than half had hoped he would not come that night. Somehow it was one of the nights when I thought most of Edward. Why did I think of him more at one time than at another? This was a question which I asked of myself but which I could not answer.

Soon Bayless and I were alone in the parlor. My aunt no longer stood upon the stairs to listen. All had been said—all that she cared to know. Victory belonged to her. As to myself—it made no difference.

Bayless complimented me upon my appear-

ance. He took it for granted that I was happy. In striving to deceive myself, I deceived him. He talked with such fervor of our purposed trip abroad, of the many countries, the art, that a glow threatened to drive the coolness from his eyes.

"And when we return?" said I, looking into his eyes.

"A home shall be in readiness for us. It is then that we shall begin truly to live. I shall pursue my work, and you may cultivate—any talent you desire to make most prominent."

He said this with a smile. And it was with truth that I answered him: "I have no talent."

"You could take up music."

"Idleness accented," I replied. This pleased him. "Or drawing," he added.

"Uselessness labeled," said I.

He laughed with real heartiness. He said that my want of vanity was a positive delight. It was this that had first drawn him toward me. Where there was so little of the egotist there must be great virtue. How little he knew of my nature. I did not see him through a mist, but reflected from a mirror of ice. Suddenly I felt that my

love for Edward was dead. Then arose a sense of my conquest over this man—it came, this sense, like a dewy morning breath, and I was thrilled. I saw the great capitals of Europe; I saw the Nile; and springing up I ran to the piano and plucked an old air, a rollicking tune from the wild hillside where the black haw trees were wont to bloom. When I looked up he was standing beside me.

"Once more, witch," he said, leaning over and touching my cheek with his own. "Make that bare-foot boy dance again."

I saw myself on the hillside. He saw himself, dancing; and then I could see him, without shoes, a gleeful boy, with his straw hat lying on the ground. I could see the imprisoned grasshoppers crawling from under the hat.

"Exquisite," he said, resuming his seat. "And yet you say you have no talent for music."

"It wasn't music, but a picture for both of us."

"A picture, and still you have no talent for drawing. Ha, it was a painting in tones." He

sat with one side of his face resting in the palm of his hand. "Are you happy?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered, and at that moment I was. Or was it an illumined desperation? I wonder what I should have said had he asked me if I loved him.

The clock in the hall began to strike. I did not count the hour, but he remarked that he had no idea that it was so late. "Ha," he remarked, "you pin the wings of butterflies to the minutes and over the hours you hoist a summer's sail."

This flattered me. A washerwoman is charmed with a poetic idea if she inspires it. He kissed me good night. I went up stairs with my lips cool. If I had loved him for a moment it was when as a boy he caught the grasshoppers. I sat down to read—poetry, "the melodious sigh of the soul," but from it I drew no consolation. I threw down the book. Consolation! I found it in the victory over myself and in my conquest over a man.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROLLED AWAY.

To be bound with ribbons to one whom we love—ah, how we might muse over it, a sunrise in the spring time of joy. But when the willing law binds us with a chain grown rusty from the tears that have dripped upon it! Let us not muse. Let us not draw out the hour, the words of the preacher. The last word has been spoken and the carriage rolls away.

In my mind there was no impressive feature arising out of the ceremony of my self-sale. I remembered that an old man with a trembling voice pronounced the banishment from girlhood into womanhood. I recalled that just before going down stairs I had torn to bits an unread letter. Ah, and I had written a few lines to tell of my treachery. In all of my life there had been but one sweet, emotional dream, and now it was ended. The mother, the aunt—money had triumphed. There was to be no anxious look into

the pinched countenance of a hungry child. Ragged poverty was not to rock the cradle. Obedience, self-sacrifice, virtue—for are we not sublime only to the degree that we banish all thought of self and retain the images of those more worthy of consideration? About me had been gathered pale and faded women, eager ghosts of dead desires; and in their sunken eyes the light of envy shone. But the last word had been spoken and the carriage had rolled away. Happiness may tremble, but it was with the cold that I shivered. Beside me he sat, with a smile cooler than the air. Ah, beginning of wedding journey, thou self-centered stupidity! Romance, wash your thin rags and hang them on a vine to dry.

The train, the long shadows of the afternoon flying with us, the distant trees, the life-sapped leaves fluttering between me and the setting sun! Night, the rumble, the halt, the cry of " all right " far off in the dark, and again the rumble. Daylight—the hills, like my old hills, brown, and with echoes of the past seeming to lie in the valleys between them—sad and reproachful echoes—the past that should speak again only out of its shroud.

Another city, but clear of smoke; the ship, the heaving bosom of the troubled ocean. And now for days at a time it seemed that all of the sickness of the entire world came upon me; and in the merciful interim I went out upon the deck to breathe the air. My husband was as sympathetic as he could find it in his smooth and unemotional nature to be, and mutely in my heart I was constantly begging him to forgive me. To forgive me for what? Was I not determined to be unto him a faithful and "law-abiding" wife? I had often mused, far remote from the world's water, that to gaze upon the ocean would be the mother of most stirring emotion—the past, the present and the future tumbling before me. But somehow I could not get my mind to grasp it. It was like a landscape, a cloud, a mere matter of course and not to be wondered at; I could not conjure it into appearing strange. I wondered if it were to be thus throughout the history-trod countries I was destined to visit. The sudden change in my spiritual life had seemed to change all material things. The ship, that great wonder of all ages, was of no interest to me. I strove to recall romances of the sea, but they had faded from my

memory. Once when the sun was setting I found an interest and a stimulus to talk. Muffled to protect us from the sharp air, Bayless and I were sitting on the deck. The ship kept on threatening to plunge head foremost down to the bottom of the sea, but hesitated and shuddered. My husband said hundreds of little things that did not evoke an answer. Was it that already I had begun to know what he was going to say? Mere cultivation, how tiresome! It is only the talk of temperament that we enjoy. "I am reminded," said I, gazing out upon our resplendent wake, "of something I read years ago—don't know where I found it: 'Experience is like the light at the stern of a ship. It illumines only the path gone over. That is recollection. But the sun illumines all paths. That is wisdom."

"A very good thought—for a man," he said.

"Why for a man?" I inquired, looking at him, for there was something in the tone of his voice that smacked of mild censure.

"I mean for a man who has failed in life," he replied. "But for a young woman it sounds too seasoned."

"I like to be called seasoned. At first I was

afraid that you might think me frivolous. But if I do show seasoning it must be because I had been taught to be—not exactly silly, but light. And the seasoned thought was a sort of rebellion."

"Ah, and have you always been rebellious?"

"Not actively; but the sweetest rebellion is sometimes passive."

"And was it rebellion that drove you to read rebellious books?"

"Oh, I don't know that my books were rebellious. Yes, they were, in a manner; they were written for men. Books written especially for women are not worth reading. There's not a thought in a hundred pages. Women writing for women must give advice, and men, writing for women, feel that they must be silly."

It was some time before he said anything, and I thought that he had suffered the subject to drop, but after a while he remarked: "I am one free to say that I don't think the so-called wise book good for woman. It 'undomesticates' her, so to speak. It leads to dissatisfaction—unquestionably. I never saw a learned woman who

wasn't dissatisfied, not only with herself but with her husband, if she had one."

"But," said I, "she must have been a companion to her husband, if she had one, and if he were inclined to think."

"But it is almost impossible for two trained minds, of the opposite sex, to think agreeably along the same channel."

"Yes, possibly, if they chance to be married to each other," I offered as a suggestion.

"Well, yes," he said, without hesitation. "There must in all government and in all business relationships be one dominant spirit, one master mind. If the man acknowledges the supremacy of the woman and accepts it as final, he may be contented to be known as her husband. But from the moment he acknowledges this, he begins to decline intellectually."

"Then you don't acknowledge complete or rather equal companionship, do you?"

"Oh, yes—after there has been established a complete understanding. A man, if he be reasonably intelligent and mature, ought to know what is good for his wife. He is her protector, and—well, her guide."

"Ah, after she has acknowledged his superiority," said I.

"Well, at least when she has observed his maturity."

This was the beginning. He had married me because he fancied that I was possessed of a mind, but to himself he reserved the right to guide it. He had not spoken thus on the occasion of our buggy ride, the time when he had said that I was so fitted to adorn a home. But perhaps homes were not adorned with minds. Somewhere I read that the mind of a drunkard's daughter is likely to be dangerously explorative. This was a timely thought. I was stimulated to rebel against it, to subvert myself, if need be, to my husband's notions. And I did try hard. But he was always so nearly perfect and I was always so far from it. He went so far as to tell me what I ought to eat. He was not only making of me a companion but a part of himself —the part to be advised and corrected. And he did it with such "unruffledness." He was so smooth, so exact. Once when going down the steps he stumbled slightly, and I asked him if he were sure that he had done it in the correct man-

ner, and he said nothing but he reproached me with his cool eyes. Pain is not more the enemy of happiness than dignity is of love.

In Westminster Abbey he cautioned me not to betray my wonder. In Paris, where I purchased dresses and hats that would have excited the envy of Olive, he threw a cool repression over my rising spirit, there in that hilarious sunshine. In Germany we drank beer, and he told me when I had enough. In Italy I marveled too much. These little things comprised my European trip. I hated the countries through which we leisurely took our way, and yet America—home, could offer nothing as an improvement. Not once did he show any temper. He was always cool and dignified.

We went up the Nile, but I did not see antiquity lying asleep, dreaming along the shores; I was listening to be told what I ought not to do. He reproached me for my lack of interest. He said that I would rather read of such things than to see them. That was true. I could read alone.

After "doing" the traveler's world, we returned to Rome. Here Bayless settled down to the study of his profession. Hot weather came

but it did not ruffle him. Unto himself he must have been a coolness. I could not read Italian, but in our hotel there was a large number of old English books, and with them I spent my evenings and many of my mornings and noons. It was a musty, but, I must confess, the only delicious part of my "travels." My letters to my mother were invariably cheerful. But sometimes it was hard to keep a "mood" from stealing into them. One day I received a notable letter from Olive. "You may not be surprised when I tell you that I am no longer the Widow Pague," she said. "Just one week ago to-day Charley and I were married. This makes all records clean, doesn't it? I think that my mother wanted me to look around for another old gentleman, but as I was the mistress of an estate, she did not presume to argue with me. I know you must be happy, away over there in that artistic past. Some day Charley and I are going over the same ground. We have both joined the church, and you have no idea how Charley has sobered down. How I glory in his love for me. I am too happy to write."

A few days later there came a letter from

Chicago. I was expecting one from my aunt. This one was from a woman who boarded there and who had been one of the ghosts at my wedding. It bore a piece of sad news. My poor aunt had died of pneumonia.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EXPLORING HIS MIND.

Mr. Bayless took a "sensible" view of my grief. He said that as I had not been long at my aunt's house my sorrow was not such as must have resulted from the death of a "long standing associate." Those were his words. What he said was in a measure the truth and therefore I regarded him as the more cold-blooded to remark it. In all things and upon all occasions he was so philosophical that I was once prompted to ask him if he were not of Scotch lineage, and he answered that his parents were not only born and brought up in Scotland but had been married in that meditative and self-contained country. In comparison with Rome, moss-grown with time, ivied over with history—sentiment eternal; in comparison with Rome, Chicago is but a wild and clamoring adventure, and yet I longed to breathe again its sharp, inspiring air. I was weary of art. I longed again to look into

the eyes of the untutored soul. I was nauseated with the past. But so determined was I to mould myself to my husband that I expressed no wish. My chief aim was to explore his mind and to anticipate his whims. But he was like the future. I could not fathom him. He had no whims, no impulses. He was a smooth, an even and a tiresome road, unexpected at times only because I could not see how he was to become smoother. But he did. If he were not imperious enough to tell me what I ought to do, he was so "just" as to speak of what I should not have done. At the hotel table an American traveler related a humorous incident, so flavored with the fun of my own country that I laughed louder than the waiter might have thought proper; and my husband looked at me with rebuke in his eye. That night when we were alone I said to him:

"I wish you would draw up a set of rules for me."

He looked up from his great black book of drawings, towers and cupolas, and fixed his critic eye upon me: "Rules?"

"Yes, so that I may know how to act. I am a barbarian in Rome."

"I should think that your own good sense might teach you."

"But it doesn't—it won't. I don't think I have any good sense."

"You knew how to act when you were helping Nevum to collect bad debts."

"Probably it was because there wasn't anything in a bad debt to laugh about."

"Gypsy, you remind me of an expression the English critics used a number of years ago—or rather an expression applied to certain critics. They were called 'smart slaters,' because they were always eager to sacrifice truth and art to the opportunity of saying something they conceived to be smart."

"And I am a smart slater."

"Yes, that is what you are."

"Well, it requires *some* sense, at least. You are promoting me."

"Now, please don't be silly."

"Mr. Bayless, there is something that I should like for you to tell me."

"Well," he said.

"I want you to tell me in what way I have disappointed you. If I am so wrong now, how

could I ever have had the appearance of being right? How could I have so deceived a man of your discernment? In what way, now, have I fallen so short of your expectations?"

He looked down at his book, turned a few leaves and then looked again at me. "Do you wish to know the truth?"

"I am asking you for the truth."

"It is because you do not love me."

"Love you? You didn't ask me if I loved you. You must have taken that for granted."

"And why shouldn't I take it for granted when you consented to be my wife?"

"You are standing on the mountain top of morality and therefore I cannot argue with you. The fact that you fancy yourself cheated places me wholly in the wrong, and I shall not say that I was right. But I thought that I could learn to love you and I have been trying—am still trying. And if you help me, I shall succeed—I think. It is my ambition to be your companion."

"You have tried to love me. Then I have married an experiment."

"I thought all marriages were experiments."

"Oh, did you? But an honest word might

have set aside our experiment. I am beyond the experimental age."

"Then you are beyond the age when you should have married."

"What, reproaching me with my age, are you?"

"No, I don't mean to do that. Let us not dispute. Draw up a list of my faults and I'll promise to study——"

"That is foolish," he broke in.

"But we can't go on in this way. We are drifting apart."

He arose and walked up and down the room. "Drifting apart," he repeated. "Have we really ever been together? You have always been occupied in your own way. You take no interest in my work. You read things that I care nothing for, and an antagonistic book is the wedge that splits a household asunder."

"But you don't expect me to read books on architecture, do you?"

"Oh, no, I don't expect anything."

"Mr. Bayless, the truth is that you are disappointed in me and you cannot hide it. Therefore, everything I do is wrong. I did not expect to

place myself at once upon a plain with you. I knew that it would require time, but I had hoped that time would be granted. You seemed to be considerate and I thought you would be patient. But as I said before, let us not dispute. I give myself into your hands. You shall be my teacher. Perhaps when we go—home, I may appear better. Here I am too new, too raw for my surroundings. Help me."

No human being could have been more sincere. No heart could have been more earnest in its endeavor to please. In my mind there arose no thought in rebellion against my husband.

In the Vatican there was a picture of a young priest—it bore a resemblance to Edward; and when I saw it I hastened away, and no more did I go into that room. For a long time I had dreamed about Edward, but even from the visions that came with sleep I banished him. I was determined to be true not only consciously but unconsciously as well.

One morning Mr. Bayless said that within a few days we were to sail for home. The word home leaped into my heart—it died there and I must have grown pale, for he said: "Hasn't

any terror for you, has it. I thought you wanted to return to America."

"I do."

"Then why that look?"

"I wasn't conscious of any look. Please don't torture me."

"Torture you? You tell me you want advice and when I talk to you, you complain that I torture you."

And thus it was day after day. But sometimes, though the occasions were rare, he would drop back into his "pre-married" graces, his poses, his faultlessness of demeanor; and it was then that he would talk entertainingly, almost as he had talked when he took me out driving, when he said that I had come with verses in my eyes. Ah, how long ago that seemed now! Then our differences in tastes were amusing, but now they bore the promise of a coming tragedy. One night I asked him to go with me to the opera. He answered that he desired to study. I said nothing, but finding a book, a sweet old thing, "A Sentimental Journey," I was soon lost in the winding ways of its Gothic labyrinths, when Bayless looked up from his black book of draw-

ings and said: "Gypsy, the Sphinx is chatty compared with you. What are you reading?"

I told him.

"What, that vulgar slush?"

"Vulgar? Why, I find in it a thousand delicate beauties. Nowhere is there such an atmosphere. It reminds me of a silk handkerchief full of ripe plums."

"What would you do if I didn't offer you an opportunity to whet yourself sharp? Silk handkerchief—ripe plums."

"There was a time when you would have called it a pretty fancy. So it is you and not I who have changed."

"Changed! Do you think a sensible man wants that sort of stuff constantly dinged into his ears? I can stand a good deal of it—have stood a great deal, but there is a limit to endurance."

"Well, tell me what you want me to say and I will say it."

"There you go again. Is it possible that you have no respect for me at all? By the way, there was something I intended to speak to you about.

You are developing too much of a fondness for wine."

"I will leave it off entirely."

"Now, I didn't mean that. You misconstrue everything I say."

"Are you done with me? May I return to this book?"

"Oh, by all means. Ah, whom do you prefer, Sterne or Rabealis?"

"I have never made the acquaintance of Rabealis."

"Is it possible! I thought you loved all the children of Boccaccio."

"I have never read him, either."

"You astonish me."

"If you will tell me what to read, I will read it."

"Oh, out of a determination to be respectable, eh? When we are good by determination, we are like the drunkard, sober between sprees. But I don't suppose you can help it if your tastes are low."

"Mr. Bayless, this book is a classic. It is as much a part of English literature as Shakespeare himself. It was not intended for children, per-

haps, and neither was the Bible. And I wish to tell you that my tastes are as pure as yours, even if your parents were Scotch. Before you reply, let me say that I couldn't have believed it possible that I could endure so much. I used to think that your coolness was mere respectability; now I know that it was a lack of soul. You have no heart—and I shall no longer try to love you."

"Indeed! Now that is a blow in a most vital spot. You will no longer *try* to love me. Have I importuned you to try? I discovered very early that so far as I was concerned you were simply—passive. When you thought that I was not taking note, you sighed out your spirit, and turning to me, you were lifeless. Whenever you have evinced any life at all, it has been to say something to grate upon me. Oh, you are quite martyr-like when you fold your hands and declare that you will do as I like. But why haven't you discovered what I like? It was your duty to do so. Don't tell me that you have tried to be my companion. You have not. You are companion only to your own inimical thoughts."

Yes, it was thus that the days and nights wore

along. I hated the sunrise, the sunset—the moon and the stars. My married life had merged everything into one endless distaste. I did not try to justify myself. About me there was something wrong, but I was constantly seeking for it, to eradicate it.

At last we were ready to sail for America. I did not dare think of going home. That word had been blotted out. Europe had been a nightmare. Now what was America to be?

CHAPTER XXVII.

LOOKED AT HIS WATCH.

We arrived in Chicago near the latter end of May, having been abroad nearly two years. Our house had been made ready, a beautiful place in Prairie Avenue. For a moment I was almost happy. Was it to be a home? How well appointed was everything, my room; but above all, the library, with many an old book. At the appointed time the friends of my husband gathered about us, in our house, to bid us welcome home. Never in my life did I exert myself more to please; never did I strive to make my husband believe that I was happy. But when the guests were gone and the lights were turned low, he reproached me for the effort I had made. He said that it had been too obvious. It had been a strain. I admitted it to him, and, in relaxation, being too wearied to defend myself, I sought the solitude, ah, the grateful solitude of my own room. I thought of my poor aunt.

That day I had stood by her grave. I had gone to the place where she had lived and worried, and had asked the strangers there to let me sit for a moment in the room, my room, where I had mused at the window, where I had gazed upward into the black clouds.

The coming and the going of the days brought no vital change. Some man, a friend, said that he thought Mr. Bayless was losing his health. I reproached myself with being the cause, and when we went to church on the following Sunday I prayed fervently for a settlement of all of our differences. That night as my husband and I sat in the library I told him that I loved him. It was not the truth, but I told him because I thought it my duty. He looked at me and yawned.

"What did you say?" he inquired.

How hard it was to repeat the word. But I did. "Oh," he said, and looked at his watch.

Sometimes we would sit for hours without uttering a word. But when company came he would brighten, talk about our travels and remind me of the places we had visited together. How they were fading from my mind, those

travels. It was all like a dream, curtained about with a mist.

It must have been about two months after our return that he was commissioned to draw the plans for a public building in Minneapolis. And it was necessary that he should spend much of his time in that city, he said. When I asked him if it would be of any advantage for me to go with him, he smiled.

"What good could you do?" he inquired.

"But I could be with you."

"I said what good."

"Yes, I understood you. I didn't know but you might need a typewriter."

"Do you think I want to take you there in that capacity? I have some little pride left—for myself, at least. Miss Cretchmar will go with me."

"Who is she?"

"My stenographer."

"How long has she been with you?"

"Oh, it isn't possible that you could be jealous, is it?"

"No, I'm not jealous. But you never spoke about her."

"I don't talk about business at home."

"I should like to see her."

"Why?"

"Because you haven't spoken of her."

"Oh, a very good reason."

I was glad when he left. Now the house was all mine. In it I ran riot. The servants seemed to be amazed at me. One night I made candy as we used to do in the country, and gleefully I pulled it with the house maid. Everything seemed happy because Bayless was away; and the next morning a bird with a new song came to my window. My husband was gone nearly a week before he wrote to me. His letter was as short and as cold as his smile. Another week passed and he suddenly appeared, at breakfast; and with him came a cold cloud. But I pretended that I was glad to see him. I plied him with questions, to prove my interest, and when he remained silent, which he did for the most part, I continued with my questions.

"Are your affairs progressing well?" I inquired.

"Yes, very well."

"Is it to be a very large building?"

"Yes. How have you been spending your time?"

"Reading, mostly; and to please you I took down a book full of towers and cornices and made a study of the drawings."

"How could that please me?"

"I don't know, but I thought it might."

Then there fell a silence, and through it a cool breeze seemed to be blowing. The following day was Sunday, and I asked him if he would like to attend church. "Please come on," I urged him. "The day is beautiful."

No matter how anxious he might have been to go, my willingness seemed to lame his step with a halt. Then occurred the idea that it was his desire to get rid of me, and this thought worried me, in the night when he was asleep. On this particular Sunday he contributed liberally to the church, was cheerful with everyone whom he met, but the moment he had entered his own door a silence fell upon him. In the evening, however, when a friend dropped in, his spirit arose and he laughed. I looked at him in surprise. I had almost forgotten that there was

any mirth left in his nature. When the visitor was gone, I said:

"Every one else brings you pleasure. I alone turn down the lamp of your countenance."

"How long did it take you to think of that sharp thing?" he asked, wearily seating himself in his big leather chair.

"It was not a sharp thing; it was simply a truth," said I, standing near, looking down upon him. He turned his eyes upward and they seemed all white, ghastly; and without speaking a word he looked down, his hands listless on the arms of the chair.

"Mr. Bayless, will you please answer one question and answer it honestly?"

"An honest question shall be honestly answered," he replied. "What is the question—if it *is* honest?"

"Oh, it is honest. You can't help but recognize that. It is this: Wouldn't you be happier without me?"

He looked up at me, his eyes all white, and looked down again.

"Wouldn't you?"

"Now what's the use of talking that way?

Must a man be reproached for his temperament? Don't you suppose I am human being enough to have my moods? And if I have, am I to blame for them?"

"No, you aren't to blame for having moods, perhaps, but aren't you to blame for making only a half secret of the fact that *I* am to blame?"

"Who said you were to blame?"

"You didn't, but wouldn't you be more honest with me if you were to say so?"

"Ah," he spoke up, "and don't you believe that a little honesty as you go along would be good for you?"

"I am quite sure of it, and I shall begin by telling you something. I was almost happy while you were away."

"Almost! Why not completely?"

"Because I expected you to return."

I ought not to have said this. I regretted it a moment afterward. I begged his pardon. I told him that it was not true, but he knew that it was. "Oh, don't take it back," he said.

I started toward the door, hoping that he would call me back, but he did not. I waited, looking around, but he did not turn his eyes to-

ward me. Then I hastened back to him, attempted to sit on the arm of the chair, but he motioned me off.

"Please let me have a moment's peace—alone," he said; and I left him sitting there.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOWN TO THE CITY.

My letters to my mother were "happy." But whenever she spoke of coming to visit me, I always put her off. This was hard to do, of course —I mean hard upon me; but Bayless had declared that she must not come. How the months passed it would be impossible for me to recall. I have retrospective visions of sullen breakfasts and gloomy dinners—and of long nights alone in the library, reading, wondering how it was to end. As the winter months came on I was taken with neuralgia. The family physician gave me a powder that eased the pain. It was morphine. Soon, or I might say at once, I discovered that it not only relieved the suffering but quieted me mentally, rendering my unhappy condition a matter of dreamy indifference. In many ways, however, all my faculties seemed to be quickened. My mind became strangely active; my memory was strengthened. Books that I had read years

ago came back to me. I could almost see the printed page. But when the influence of the drug passed off, all of my former wretchedness returned, intensified. I knew that to become a slave to morphine meant a living death; I had read and heard enough to convince me that it meant degradation in every way, morally, physically, mentally; and at times I fought against it, yielding only when the world and especially my own household atmosphere grew black before my eyes and in my soul, the mirror of life. Bayless did not suspect; he did not see the chains that were forging. The winter passed listlessly away, and I could not see or feel that the habit was growing. Sometimes I asserted my freedom from it, felt strong again in my determination to make something of my life. But the shadow was over me. My married life was a failure beyond hope.

For the most part Mr. Bayless was engaged in drawing the plans of buildings outside of Chicago. The newspapers had spoken of his studies in Rome. In the smaller cities this was of important weight. It was as if one had gone thither to study sculpture or fiddling.

One morning I heard my husband giving instructions as to the packing of his trunk. I asked him if he were going away.

"Yes, to Duluth," he answered.

"Are you going to be gone long?"

"Oh, I suppose that part of it does interest you."

"Mr. Bayless," I said, standing before him as he sat in his leather chair, "don't leave me with bitter words to taste in your absence. Let us think of each other as kindly as we can. If we have made a mistake in our marriage, let us recognize it and make the best of it. You have talked about philosophy. Let us apply it. The serenest heart is often the one that has been broken and mended. Let us begin now to mend ours."

I fancied that this was an appeal not easy to resist. In the mood then upon me I felt the force of a calm resignation and I am sure that it must have shown in my countenance, but if so, it was met with resentment.

"A mistake is all the more accentuated when we make a virtue of it," he replied, looking at

me with his olden smile, now grown colder with the years.

"Ah," said I, "but a mistake may be turned into a virtue."

"No homilies, please."

"But am I to say nothing? Am I always to be silent?"

With an impatient hand he motioned my dismissal, but I would not go. "Are you so fond of quarreling?" he asked; and now his smile was freezing.

"It is hopeless," I muttered.

He nodded. "It looks that way, doesn't it?"

"Yes, for you will have it that way. And now would you mind telling me if that Crutchmar woman is going with you?"

"Why should you ask? I don't see why you should care," he replied, slowly moving his feet on the floor.

"You have made it impossible for me to care very much, it is true. But I still reserve the privilege of the wife. I inquire."

"Oh, yes; and the question arises out of the privilege and not out of concern. By the way,

I think I have recognized one of your contributions to literature. Here it is."

From his desk he took out an afternoon newspaper and pointed to a screed entitled "Why Marriage Is a Failure."

"You wrote that," he said.

"I did not."

"Read it before you answer."

"What is the use since I know that I didn't write it? I know that it is not so strong as I could make it."

He dropped the paper on the floor. I heard it scraping on the carpet as he wiped his feet upon it.

"Just as plain as if you had signed your full name to it," he said.

"There are other women, Mr. Bayless; and perhaps it is a matter of selfish consolation to know that I am not the only one whose heart has been broken."

"What, your heart broken!" He laughed. "A woman marries for—well, opportunity. It is given to her. She sighs over it, pities herself in what she considers a poetic way, and then says that her heart is broken. How could I break that

which you have never given into my keeping—something you have kept hidden from me? If you have had a heart you buried it in an iceberg before you married me."

"I offered it to you and you spurned it. But perhaps you didn't find it to your notion. It may not have seemed so sympathetic as the heart of a Cretchmar, for instance."

"I forbid you to speak that woman's name in my presence."

"Is it so sacred?"

"Compared with some that I know it is holy."

Without bidding him good-by I left him there. I heard them taking out his trunk—heard him drive away; and a sense of freedom came down from heaven.

In the afternoon I went over into Jackson Park. In places how desolate it was, the ruin of a world's gaiety. Workmen were pulling down the iron skeletons. Nearly all of these bare giants had been removed. Those that remained were grimmer in their loneliness. Their lives had gone out in fire—martyrs at the stake of demolishing progress. The day was warm and breathful of perfume, the redolence of early

wild-flowers growing amid crumbling concrete. The birds that had flown to the south on that autumn day, which now seemed so long ago, had all of them come back to sing in joyousness.

For a long time I wandered about, looking for fading spots of history—my history; but few were there to be found, for the pickax and the shovel had been active. But there was one, the umbrella-shaped tree on the wooded island; and here, on the same bench I sat down to muse. It was not difficult to fancy myself free again, to imagine that I had just come from my aunt's house. In the soft air I heard the music strains of the many nations, echoes of a world's holiday. Some one turned aside from the path, halted, gazed at me—Edward. It was the past come back again and it made me dumb; and I sat there as in a trance, unable to move. I heard a sigh, and I knew that he was sitting beside me. The present rushed upon me, smothering the sweet thrill of the past.

"Gypsy—Mrs. Bayless."

He took my hand. Slowly I withdrew it, but I did not arise. The present had not completely returned.

"I didn't expect to meet you here," I said, almost breathlessly.

"I come here often," he replied. "In the summer I rest here. This seat is my—vacation. Alone? No, a spirit is always here with me, and that spirit is here now—embodied."

I looked into his eyes. There was that same out-pour of something into my own. Again he took my hand and I did not withdraw it, for his words were so sweet, the first I had heard in years—so sweet that I could not resist him.

"It has been a long time," he said, speaking low.

"Yes, a very long time," I replied, my hand in his. We sat in silence. On the grass the robins were playing. Not one among them had sold her heart.

He began to speak, and before I comprehended his words, so low were they, it seemed that I was listening to soft music, a hymn; and I could scent the flowers heaped upon the coffin of a dead hope. I listened without interrupting him and after a time his words pierced in upon me.

"It was a long time before I came back here,"

he said, holding my hand close. "When your note came——"

"Don't speak of it," I pleaded.

"Yes, let me speak of it. When it came—I knew for the first time that your heart was mine, that you loved me—that they had sold you. You couldn't disguise it. It was as if you had sent the letter from your death-bed."

"Please don't talk about it. Tell me about yourself."

"It is of myself that I am telling you. But I did not in my heart reproach you. I simply felt that you had fought against them as long as you could and that you had been unable to conquer."

Not a word of reproach. Surely his heart was merciful and forgiving.

"Yes, for a long time I stayed away from here. I went to Kansas and continued my studies as best I could; and when I returned to Chicago a year afterward, I was prepared for the bar. I was fortunate enough to find a distant relative, a lawyer more in need of rest than of practice; and I took an office with him and have managed to make a fair sort of a living. Of course my great incentive was gone, but I

worked hard. My associate lives out in the country and doesn't come in very often."

"There is one question that I hope you will not ask me," said I; and he drew me closer to him, saying that he knew what it was. "You don't wish me to ask you if you are happy," said he.

"Yes, that is it."

"Then you will tell me without my asking," he replied; and I thought of the time when he had sworn, there in that very seat, to keep his word, but had not. "You haven't changed much," said I.

"Oh, yes, outwardly. They say that I have sobered into—well, some of my friends call me the undertaker. But how little you have changed. And if at all, for the better. You are handsomer than ever. In your eyes there is more soul, and your voice, if possible, is sweeter."

"You must not talk that way," I replied, pulling my hand away from him. He looked at me, smiling sadly. I arose. I told him that I must go home.

"No, not yet," he declared. "Sit down, please, I have something to say to you."

"But perhaps you ought not to say it."

"Then it is more worth the hearing, don't you know. Wait just a moment. There can be no harm in talking to me, can there? Hasn't a married woman the privilege of talking to her former—friends? Sit down, please."

I sat down. My heart was so hungry for his words. "What is it you were going to say?" I inquired.

"But will you promise not to go away?"

"I will promise to do the best I can."

He leaned toward me. He attempted to take my hand, but I forbade it. "Still fighting me," he said.

"But I must fight now, you know."

"No, you mustn't. Gypsy, I have dreamed of you every night. And although I said just now that the great incentive to work was lacking, yet it was not wholly lost, for in my dreams I always possessed you—and the time will come when I shall possess you. Don't shake your head; you know it must be. Nature has one cry

above all others for me—that we belong to each other."

"You must not—you shall not talk to me that way."

Again I arose. But my feet were shod with lead. What harm could there be in listening to this faithful heart? But I was waiting for him to beg me to sit down; and this he did, not in words only but in sonnets. I sat down again, declaring that I ought not to listen to him, and yet longing in a way not well disguised, for more of his words, his heart-throbs. They were as the echo of my own pulsations. All of the laws in the world cannot make a morality. This quality must have been born within. But I shall not strive to defend myself. No matter how much it costs me I must tell the truth, for without truth no moral can be drawn from a story, and without this a story might better remain in the darkness of the mind.

"More than once I sought to find out whether you had returned," he went on, "but there was no way, except by watching the newspapers with the hope of seeing your name. After an age I found it. But then I did not know where you

were to live; and after this I waited for the new directory to come out. When it did come, only a few days ago, I seized it as a man might snatch a telegram. And then I found out. I went to the place, or rather to a place near by and watched for you—waited a long time—more than once—not with the intention, however, of making so bold as to speak to you. I wanted or rather I hoped simply to see you—to feed my starving eyes. To-day I was rewarded. I saw you come out of the house and I followed you to this place. And you are not going to leave me now."

"But I must go pretty soon."

"Why should you go? I saw them take a trunk out of the house and I saw Bayless drive away. Let us live for a time as we once lived—free; and then if you wish to leave me, never to see me again—but this must not be. Once you told me that without my love you would be miserable. Do you remember?"

"Yes, we were sitting here."

"Yes, and the sun was sinking just as it is now. Ah, and the memory of those words, mingled with the light of the sinking sun, has kept

my heart from breaking. I could not picture Europe, because I have never seen one of its countries, but I could see you in a strange land —looking homeward, and yet not knowing why you wished to return. It was not vanity, but my heart, that told me you were unhappy, that history, antiquity, meant nothing to you."

"Your heart spoke the truth. There is no way that I can hide the truth from you. My very silence shouts it."

He seized my hand and bent over it, kissed it; and when he looked up, his eyes were stricken with tears. "You are not going home now," he said. "You are going down to the city to dine with me."

I bowed my head.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OUT OF THE MILLION NIGHTS, ONE WAS HIS.

It was a long time before I consented to go with him. As long as the sun's rays fell about me I said no, persuading him not to persuade me; but when the twilight came and the shadows lay upon the sward, I arose, with him tightly gripping my arm, and went with him. Not out of rebellious mood but out of hunger for his sympathy was I induced to bend myself to his will. But was I not bending myself to my own will?

"Shall we go to our old restaurant?" I asked as we were rumbling along on a grip car.

"It is no longer our old place," he replied. "It has been changed about. The warm cherry wood has been replaced with cold marble. Let us wander about and by chance find some new place."

He was holding my hand. I did not resist him now. The warm currents of our hearts

were mingling, in one emotional stream. Few were the words that we spoke. It was a time for silence, for a hypnotized musing upon self. All of the past was mellowed and there was no future. Love legitimatized lawlessness. There was no lawlessness, for graceful nature walked forth, free from conventional skirts. I felt as if having drunk a hot cordial, it was bubbling in my blood. I should have been happy had I known that death awaited us at the end of the ride. There are times when one is thankful for a minute, when beyond a minute there lies not repentance—only nothing.

We got off the car and wandered about, seeing not but feeling everything, the delicious currents of air, cool from the lake. There was music in even the sharp cry of the newsboy. Nature and all the material world had been transformed.

"You look sad," said Edward.

"But I am happy—in a dream."

"Then dream on, for life is only a dream."

"The wise have said so. But perhaps we are awake a part of the time; and then we are unhappy." Suddenly I was seized with a fear of the

dawn. " Suppose some one should see us—some one that knows."

" In this beehive? It is not likely."

A slight fear of the future may sweeten the present. We walked aimlessly, turning from one street into another.

" Shall we go in here? " he asked, and I looked up. It was the restaurant to which Nevum had taken me, where the foreigners had stared at me. I drew back. " Come on," he urged.

Elevators were taking guests to the private rooms above. But now I did not refuse the seclusion, the rooms that looked so darkly shaded when viewed from the street. Gently he touched my arm and I stepped into the elevator. We were shown into a small dining room on the third floor. The waiter turned on an electric light and left us alone. Edward stood looking at me.

" Alone and almost for the first time," he said.

" It ought not to be," I weakly protested. " It is not right. Let us go below."

" No, sit down."

The waiter knocked on the door and entered. He placed a bill of fare on the table and was about to withdraw again and when Edward re-

marked that we would give our orders. It did not take long to decide as to what we wanted. The mystery, the cat-like walk of every one alarmed me, and I did not know what was to be brought. We sat down. Edward reached over to take my hand.

"No," I said. "The waiter will be back again in a moment."

"But he will knock before entering."

"And enter the moment he knocks."

I leaned my elbows upon the table, with my chin in my hands. He smiled at me.

"Ah, you think you are now beyond my reach," he said. "But you aren't, for we are—alone. There is no world except the one here, within our reach. The other world is dead."

"No, it is merely asleep and will awake with a loud roar," I replied.

He shook his head. "So far as we now must know, it is never to awake." He gazed at me, into my eyes; and from his eyes there was that same warm pour of something.

"Tell me about your work," I said. "Do you like it?"

"Under certain conditions it would be a delight, but without you all is drudgery."

"But you can't have me. That was settled nearly three years ago."

"So far as the law understood it, yes; but there is a higher law."

"That higher law may do for the life to come. It is not in force here."

"Yes, in force here—now. Under that higher law I love you, and from the decision of the heart, the judge of the higher law, there is no appeal."

"Once you spoke of the fever that was on you. Hasn't it begun to pass?"

He shook his head. "It is stronger than ever before. It is incurable. I——"

The waiter knocked and came in with plates, bread and water. Edward gave him a piece of silver and he walked even lighter and more catlike than before. He bowed low as he withdrew.

"You were saying something when he interrupted you," said I. My heart was hungry for his words.

"I have so much to say, have begun to say so much and have been so unable to finish it that I

don't know where I was when he interrupted."

"We were speaking of your fever. You said that it was incurable."

"Yes, and it is. It is beyond all reach of medicine. I was out in Kansas in a drouth and was hotter, more burning than the drouth itself. My fever took me out of bed in the early morning, and I went forth to turn the dewy dawn into scorching noon."

"Don't go beyond the truth."

"When the truth is an extreme, there is no going beyond it. Out there I suffered, and with only one consolation—a narrow and selfish one, that you were miserable. For the first time I looked for European date lines in the newspapers. In my mind I traveled through the different countries as well as ignorance could, gazed at pictures of the Nile; but only once did I find a kindred paragraph—once when I found that he had gone to Rome, to study. Then I lived in Rome. I bought stereoscopic views of the Vatican and studied in detail the rooms of that great storehouse of the church, for I knew that you would go there."

"Yes, I went there many a time, and once I

found a portrait that looked like you and ——"

"And you fled from it."

I looked at him in surprise. My hands were clasped upon the table and he put his hand on them and held them fast. "You fled from it because you wanted to forget me. But you couldn't. And why? Because nature did not intend that you should. You belong to me."

He moved closer to me. He bowed his head over my hands—kissed them; and I begged him not to, but he did, time and again. The waiter knocked and came in with the food.

"You must be rational now," I said when the waiter had gone out.

"I am always as rational as the past and the present will permit. Perhaps you can make me so by telling me of your travels."

"I had no travels. I was walking in my sleep."

"Then you dreamed."

"No, it was not even vivid enough for a dream. The Nile arose and overflowed its own history, leaving upon it a sediment of new earth."

"You saw Paris."

"I saw gowns, hats—and heard the faint echo of an opera. With the heart left behind there is

no travel—only a sleep-walk. But tell me, wasn't there a time when you felt bitter toward me?"

"No," he answered, as if wondering, slowly shaking his head. "I plucked out the spear that was thrust into my bosom and—kissed it."

"Oh, don't—don't talk that way. You are throwing spears at my heart. Reproach me if you will, but don't talk that way."

"Reproach you? It is not in my nature. You might set your foot on my heart and yet would it breathe love."

"I didn't know that a human being could be so forgiving."

"Ah," he said, "love is of itself a continuous forgiveness."

"Sometimes it is a continuous suffering," I replied.

"But should not be when love knows that it is loved."

Closer he moved toward me. He took both of my hands in one of his; he put his arm about me, and I struggled to draw away from him, but he held me, pouring out a volume of passionate words. He pressed my head against his bosom; he kissed my hair, my lips, my neck; and almost

in a swoon I lay in his arms. Suddenly the blighting present rushed upon me, and, struggling free from him, I seized my hat, vowed that I must go home. But he caught me in his arms, kissed me passionately and held me back from my weak purpose.

"Out of the thousand, the million of nights that have been, and out of the millions that are to be, precious, there is one night that belongs to me—to my soul—this night."

Nowhere was there a sound save his voice, low and desperately sweet. Yes, one other sound, the cry arising from my own heart—and about his neck he folded my willing arms; and all of the world and all of the ages that had passed—all of the love of man and woman—all was a vital present, all an illumined *now*.

CHAPTER XXX.

THAT OLD PICTURE AGAIN.

Repentance is the sorrowful food of the soul. But there may be a half repentance. It is when the soul feeds reluctantly upon sorrow and the heart gladly sips the nectar of remembered love. For days I sat about, unable to read, unable to think, dreaming, wondering at myself, as I have fancied a contemplative infant must speculate at its own mysterious existence. There came a brief note from Bayless, but I did not answer it. Shortly afterward, by appointment, I met Edward again. It was in the evening, at the restaurant. He said that I looked sad. Sight obscures a memory as too much scenery in the theatre blunts the imagination; and perhaps, upon seeing him, repentance arose for the moment as the dominant feeling within me. But from the street, from all of the outer air of the world, there came that same music. I was loved, and life was a melody.

Late in the night he parted from me at my door. The lights were dim, and he stood with his arm about me. He had told me that he was going to Kansas on business, to be away a month. A month! What a desert of time. Had he said a century it would not have fallen heavier upon me. He said that I must be brave. I told him that I should be. And I was.

Two days later Bayless returned, in the evening. I met him at dinner, and we talked, each striving to please and placate the other, it seemed. After dinner he went into the library. I did not at once follow him. I went to my own room, to think; and when I had thought, for a long time, I entered the library. He looked up with reproach in his eyes. He had talked to me, had done his duty, and now why should he be disturbed in his study?

"I thought you had taken out all the books you care to read," he said.

"I haven't come for a book," I replied, standing near his chair, looking at him. His eyes seemed to say, "Then what can you want?" but his lips spoke the words, "Won't you sit down?"

"No, I thank you."

"Well?"

"Mr. Bayless, it is impossible for us to live in the same house."

He frowned at me. "What rot is this?"

"The rottenness of truth. I shall leave your house tonight."

He shoved back his chair. "Now who has been telling you tales? Has some meddlesome wretch sent you an anonymous letter? It is not true. I can prove it. But of course you pin your faith to a conspiracy against me. Leave this house and foist a scandal? You shall not."

A light began to shine on me, but to it I shut my eyes. "I must leave this house tonight, never to enter it again."

"But it will ruin me. You don't want to do that, do you? Didn't I come home in good humor with you? Hadn't I resolved on my way home that we were to get along better? Hadn't I planned that you should go to Duluth with me? And now you threaten to desert me. I know that we have not lived happily together; I know that you have not cared for my society; I know that you would rather be alone. But if you leave me now I shall be ruined. You must pay no

attention to evil tongues. A letter that bears no name should not be considered. Sit down and let us talk of our plans."

"I can tell you of my plans standing here. They are simple. Our paths diverge."

"Gypsy, that is utter nonsense. Do you remember the picture I spoke of, a long time ago —of the Venetian girl?"

"Yes, and it has been a long time, but you have never shown it to me. I wouldn't ask about it when we returned from abroad, but I looked for it, on the walls—everywhere, but couldn't find it. I don't care to see it now."

"But you must," he cried, bounding out of his chair. "I have it here." He unlocked a drawer of a bookcase and took out an etching. "See, it is your image," he said, holding up the picture beneath the light. "Your mouth, your hair. In an evil hour, an hour of misunderstanding, I took it down and hid it away, but I will hang it here —where I can see it."

I took the picture and threw it on the floor. The frail frame broke. The pieces flew about his chair. The picture curled up, like a scroll. He sat down. His old-time smile came back to

him. "My little girl has a temper," he said. "But come, sit here on the arm of my chair."

"It is too late, Mr. Bayless. Since your return I have not even touched your hand. Had you noticed it?"

"Yes and I suspected why."

"No, I don't think you have suspected. If you did, you might not be so calm."

"Gypsy, let me see the letter. Let me swear to you that it is false. Together let us burn it up and begin a new life."

"I may begin a new life, but not with you."

"Are you so unforgiving?"

"Oh, no, I forgive you everything."

"Then come and sit here with me."

"No, for you have not forgiven."

"Oh, yes I have. I forgive everything. And I promise you never to speak to that woman again. There was nothing wrong—I swear it. Give me the letter, please."

"There is no letter."

"No letter? Hasn't some one written to you?"

"No one has written."

"Then you have heard something."

"I have heard nothing."

"Then what have you been trying to do with me? Then why do you suspect me? It was unworthy of you, this role of detective. But I forgive even that. Sit down."

"Never again in this house. You have accused yourself. I have not accused you. I am here to accuse myself."

"No foolishness, Gypsy. Let us quit it."

"Do you understand what I mean by accusing myself?"

"Oh, none of that, please. Accuse yourself of what?"

"Infidelity."

"What's that?"

"I have been untrue to you."

He got up, he came to me, put his hands on my shoulders, gripped me hard. "What is that? I don't understand. Untrue to me? Tell me what you mean."

"I am no longer your wife. I am a man's mistress."

With a cry of rage he shoved me from him, back against the wall. Like a beast, a tiger he leaped upon me—seized me about the neck.

"His name—give it, or I will choke you to death!"

I did not resist him. He hurled me to one side and I fell upon the floor. He sprang at me again, but faltered as his hands were at my throat. He suffered me to arise. "By God, I will murder you unless you tell me his name!"

I moved from him. Slowly he followed me, repeating his threat. "You spoke of scandal," said I, as calm as if he had not choked me. "Be quieter or it might even now come upon your house. I will not tell you his name. If you will let me pass out I will bid you good night."

He stood gazing at me.

"Will you let me go?" He said nothing, standing between me and the door. "Then I shall break through the window. No, I will stay a moment longer. You have been untrue, have been caught by some one, and that is the reason you thought you were willing to forgive me. But it was not out of revenge that I—trailed your name in the dust. I didn't know of your unfaithfulness; I didn't care. You are afraid of scandal. Perhaps I am not. In this town there is a door that is ever swinging. It is the

door of the divorce court. It is open for you. I grant you your freedom. I shall remain mute."

He gazed at me. "I don't know what to say to you," he said.

"Yes, you do, but you are afraid to say it. You would like to say that you thank me—for promising to be mute."

"When did this happen?" he inquired, calmer, breathing easier.

"That is of no consequence. May I go now?"

"Oh, I know the name of the man."

"Then why did you choke me? May I go?"

He moved slowly from between me and the door. When I reached the door he inquired: "Where are you going?"

"That's of no consequence, either. Tomorrow I will send for what few things I possess."

"But how are you to live?"

"By work."

"No, you must not go around looking for work—under my name."

"I shall take another name."

This relieved him. He sighed as if he had put down a burden at the top of a hill. I went out of the room, out into the street.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE OCEAN FULL OF WRECKS.

From the west the warm wind came, grateful to my cheeks which now seemed freezing.

Edward, who had bade me to be brave, had doubtless not surmised that going far beyond the boundary line of courage I should be desperate, that I should cast myself into the pitiless sea of self-confessing infidelity. But ah, this ocean, swarming full of dismal wrecks of barks once freighted with promises and happiness, of treasures lying at the purple rainbow's end, were as hopeful sails compared with the shattered junk from which I had just cast myself.

I went to a small hotel not far away and registered under my old name. Early on the following morning I sent for my trunk, and when it came, I asked the expressman if he had brought a note for me, and he answered that he had not. Had I been foolish enough to expect that Bayless would send a word of regret? Now strong upon

me came the desire for morphine, and I took it, and throughout the day I dreamed, not of any happiness to come, but of objects about me, the wall paper, the dingy wardrobe, the wash-stand, anything—turning each article into a subject for study. The night that followed was long but not tiresome; I slept but little until toward dawn and then I sank into profound nothingness. In the afternoon I went down to the real estate office where once I was almost a favorite. The place had changed, the suburban town had been built, and the force in the land department was much reduced. But Roland was there. He was not surprised to see me. "They marry and after a while some of them return," he said, smiling. He thought that he could give me work. And, so, the next day, I set out again on my abandoned career as stenographer. There had been not only changes in the office, the world, but in myself. I had almost forgotten my trade. I had to guess at much of the dictation and my mind was not so grasping as it had been. But Roland was patient. He said that it would all come back to me within a day or two.

I did not know Edward's address. He would

not direct a letter to my husband's house, and so I must wait a month, until his return from Kansas. In the night I studied my old books, striving to overtake my former self, but the effort made my head ache and my system demanded the drug, but I used it sparingly and believed that I was about to conquer the evil.

Not more than a week had passed before I received notice that Bayless had filed a bill for divorce. A newspaper reporter first brought the information. He said that it had been hard work to "locate" me. I said as little as I possibly could. "We have simply found that we cannot live together," said I. "Our temperaments are at war."

"Then there was—I beg pardon, but there has been no man in the case."

"Only such men and such women as Mr. Bayless may name."

"He charges infidelity."

"On his part or mine?"

The reporter smiled. "It is not likely that he would charge it on his part."

"Not very," I admitted. "Who is named as——"

"As corespondent? Edward Somers. Have you anything to say with regard to him?"

"I suppose Mr. Bayless has said all that is necessary. Have you seen Mr. Bayless?"

"Yes. He doesn't say much of anything."

"Then please say in your report that I don't say much of anything."

He went away, smiling. Roland asked me concerning him. I gave my story as well as I could or as I thought advisable. I asked if the divorce suit would endanger my position. He said no, but that I must relieve my mind of it and give more of myself to my work. This was a hint that my improvement had not come up to expectation.

The reporter's "story" was devoted mainly to my "beauty." I had been a society belle. In Europe I had attracted the attention of crowned heads. In Rome the artists had raved over me. Edward Somers was one of the most promising of the young lawyers of the city. While he was yet poor and unknown, Bayless had taken him to his house. It was there that he first met the "beautiful and accomplished" Mrs. Bayless. For a time the husband suspected nothing. He

was a busy man, devoted to his profession. But after the lawyer had left the house, when in fact he had become prosperous, the architect discovered the attachment and suspected the relationship. He charged his wife with unfaithfulness and she did not deny it.

This made me furiously angry. I spent an evening in writing a correction, tearing up and writing again; but from the kettle of my boiling anger my words came forth as steam, fading as they arose, until they were nothing in the air. So I sent no correction. The next day Roland told me that my services were no longer required. The slowness of business had rendered it necessary to reduce the force. I had expected it and was not surprised. That night a lawyer called on me at the hotel. Suddenly at this obscure place I had become the "show boarder." The women stared at me. The men whispered. I received the lawyer in the parlor. "You are going to fight that divorce," he said.

"I am not."

"But you ought to. It is your duty to society."

"Why so?"

"I will explain. My office is just across the

hall from the office of the lawyer engaged by Mr. Bayless. We are on good terms. And it is known among all of us there that Bayless and that Cretchmar woman——"

"I don't wish to hear anything about it."

"But as I say, it is your duty—to yourself, if not to society. The decree will be granted and you will be forced to bear the odium. His conduct with that woman was notorious."

"But I don't wish to obstruct the granting of the decree. I want it granted. I want to be free."

He stared at me. "Ah, and are you quite sure that at this moment you are in full possession of all of your faculties? Grief seems to have unsettled your mind. You speak of obstructing—you use words almost foreign to a young woman. Now, I will go into court——"

"Not in my behalf," I interrupted.

He urged me, but I was firm.

It was cowardly of Bayless, but in his relationship with woman has not man nearly always been cowardly? Man's history begins with cowardice. The woman tempted him and he did eat. But would Edward be cowardly? In my

mind I could see him with the newspaper in his hand, horror-struck with the lie. I could see him speeding to me, to console and shield me—with his name and his love. But the days passed and he did not come. Was it possible that he had not heard, had not seen the infamous story? Ah, there are so many groans issuing from the great, troubled bosom of this town! Perhaps he had not heard.

The decree was granted. I searched out the number of Edward's office, and twice I called, but he had not returned. I went to the post office and called for letters, at the general delivery window—Mrs. Bayless, Miss Gipsy Dawson, Elinor Dawson, but there was nothing for me. Late one afternoon I called again at the office, in an old building in LaSalle Street, near Washington. He was there. Upon seeing me he started out of his chair. He looked about. There was no one else in the room. I held out my hands, with my head bowed. He took my hands, but in his touch there was no fire.

"Edward, I am free. You said you could not live without me. You now see that I cannot live without you."

"Be careful," he said.

"Oh, I don't know how to be careful. That newspaper story was a lie. I told the man nothing."

"Ah, but you told Bayless something. You ought not to have done that. You ruined me."

"But Edward, can there be any ruin as long as we love each other? Let us go away—far off somewhere, and ——"

"I have no money. How can I go anywhere?"

"But Edward, love may walk."

He shook his head. I felt the tears gushing out of my eyes; and now I could not see him; I called him, with my hands held out again, but he did not answer me. I ran to the door. He was stealing away, down the hall. I shouted at him, I ran to the stairs—and this was all I remember. I awoke in my wretched room. A physician and a nurse were with me. The first word that came indignant to my lips was "coward." I was thinking of Edward. Into my arm the physician injected something and I slept.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HAG AND THE DOG.

In the bitterness of my soul I cursed him, the weakling, the liar, the jelly fish. And this very excess of bitterness hardened me and seemed to strengthen my heart. I would live to be avenged upon him. Toward Bayless I felt nothing but contempt, but toward the man to whom I had given my very soul there arose a murderous hatred. The youth of love is strong, but the hatred that comes as the old age of abandoned love is stronger still, I mused as I lay in bed, longing for health, not that I might do good, but evil.

Soon I was out again, and when I was well able to walk I went forth with one idea in my poor, distracted head. It was vengeance. On the car I wandered if the passengers could read my purpose in my face. The newsboys were crying the early editions of the afternoon papers, and I mused, "Ah, soon you will have need of

another edition, with headlines not in black but red." The day was hot, but I wore a cloak and beneath it I carried something—a knife. Upon getting off the car I went straightway toward Edward's office. Weak and almost fainting, I restrained myself from my impulse to run to the place. His office was on the second floor. I did not take the elevator. It was old and seemed too slow for my purpose. I may have crept up the stairs, but I fancied that I was swift. Along the hall I ran, faster, I thought, than in his cowardice he had fled from me. I seized the door knob. The door was locked. I beat upon it. Then and not until then did I see the " for rent " sign. The wretch had fled.

Now what spirit force was there to keep me alive? And, upon what physical resources could I draw? I had but a small amount of money, and in order to live, in the vague hope of ultimate revenge, it was necessary that I should have employment. So, returning home I again took up my old book. That evening the newspapers contained a paragraph that had the shadow of interest for me. Bayless had disposed of his Chicago belongings and had departed for Rome.

A few days later I succeeded in finding work in a South Water street provision house. It was hard and not well paid, but it was something; and, with the aid of the now indispensable drug, taken moderately, I gave a sort of satisfaction—for a month, and then, having taken too much of the poison, I was charged with drunkenness and dismissed. Morphine demands alcohol. Nearly all of the slaves of one are chained by the other. Now began a desperate fight. For two days I struggled. And here, struggle is not merely a word. I felt as if I were contending against some great and overpowering strength. My hair was wet with cold perspiration. My heart fluttered. Every nerve shrieked for the drug. I could hear these shrieks. They startled my own moping blood. They frightened my soul. Unable longer to endure the agony and the terror, I went to a drug store and asked for morphine. I was refused. To numerous places I went, but was told that I could have none. Then I bought whisky. But this alone would not serve. It sickened me. I threw the bottle out of the window. Then came the minions of hell to afright me. In wide wakefulness I saw an inferno that would have driven

the poet from his purpose. Through the window there came an old and toothless hag. She mumbled a curse above my head, bending over me, breathing fetid air down into my face. I tried to spring out upon the floor, but she held me fast, and with a rope covered with frost she bound my ankles and my hands. Going then to the window she whistled. Into the room leaped a lank and hungry dog. Starvation lighted up his eyes. The hag motioned toward me, and with a howl the dog sprang upon me, and from my bones began to tear the flesh. With gulping noise he tore my breast away and I saw him swallow it. In awful agony I begged the hag to kill me, but beneath my nostrils she held some sort of vivifying essence that I might longer live to see the hound gorge himself. My life was lengthened after he had feasted full. A skeleton, red, without an ounce of flesh, I was hauled forth from the bed and made to walk about, and rattled as I moved. "Ah," said the hag to the dog, "you have not taken yet the dessert," and the beast, understanding, leaped upon me and with his long front teeth bit out my eyes. Then all was dark, but I could hear them, the dog's

sharp claws upon the floor. "Drag her out to pick her bones for lunch," the old hag cried; and with that the beast seized me to drag me away. Then came loud peals of thunder, the flash of a light, the sounds of voices; faces were above me. My cries had alarmed the hotel and the landlord had broken in the door. The house physician gave me morphine, and now I slept.

The next day was Sunday. The sun was blazing. I heard people complain of the heat, but sometimes I was freezing. A remnant of soul was left within me, and going out with a purpose in view, and with the horror of the night still vivid in my mind, I was resolved to go to church. I had heard and read of Dr. Thomas, who preached in McVicker's theater, and thither I went. For a time the music was soothing, but I could make nothing of the prayer, it sounded so far away; and when the sermon was begun, the name Jesus frightened me. It seemed that He was my enemy. And then, looking about, I saw that the place was peopled not with worshipers, but with hags that had come to torture me. I was afraid to move, afraid to look; and I sat with my eyes closed. Suddenly I heard the growl of that

dog and I started up. No, it was the rumble of the organ. I greatly desired to talk to the good man who had preached, to tell him of the trouble in my soul, to acknowledge that I had sought to commit murder; and when the sermon was done I went forward upon the stage. He met me with a kindly smile. I asked him if there were any hope for me, and he took my hand—ah, and started at the coldness of it.

"You need a physician," he said.

"No, I want your help. Get me—get me away from myself. If you have any power over the hags and that awful dog, keep them away from me."

He tried to reason with me. He told me of the goodness of God and I shuddered. I replied that God had sent me word that He was my enemy."

Then came forward a woman with a pleasant face; and the Doctor introduced me to Miss Nettie Houghton. The best years of her life had been spent in rescuing women from the slums and in striving to keep young girls from going astray. In as few words as I could I told her of my condition, who I was and all about myself; and she

took me by the hand and said that I must go home with her. She said that neither the dog nor the hag could get into her house. I went with her, and during the night she sat by me, gave me medicine, awoke me out of those frightful dreams. Early in the morning a physician came, but he would not give me morphine; so when the chance offered I ran away and returned to my room at the hotel. I had paid for more than a week in advance, but the proprietor objected to me, saying that I would drive his other guests away. "Not if the doctor does his duty," I replied. The doctor gave me morphine and I slept, but I raved again the next morning. I was taken to the county hospital. Here the physicians, accustomed to such cases, rendered me almost normal by the use of morphine. But soon it developed that I was afflicted with spinal trouble. As the days passed I became weaker. One morning I heard the doctors talking about me. It was not imaginary, for my mind was now clear—clearer than it had been for weeks. One of them said that an operation might possibly save my life. Another remarked that it was barely possible. Then it was decided to operate on me. Without any

ceremonious delay I was taken into the operating room, but after a thorough examination I was told that it would be useless to operate. "You are past all help," said the surgeon. "You would surely die under the knife."

"And is there a chance that I might get well if not operated on?"

"None whatever," he replied, shaking his head. "If you have any relatives you'd better send for them. You cannot live more than a week."

They took me back and placed me on a cot, to die.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PASSING OF THE EVIL.

At times my suffering was almost unbearable. Patience is not always rewarded. Quiet pain is passed without notice, but clamorous misery demands attention. They gave me morphine, not perhaps so much out of kindness as in a sort of self defense. My shrieks were enough to chill the blood if not enough to melt the heart.

To die—the end. The end of what? Of a poor failure misdirected from the first glimpse of life. But I was not sorry to go, if I could pass on without agony—if they would keep from me that hag and that gaunt dog. Ah, but perhaps the hag and the dog were minions of the other world. What if there they should be the first to "greet my stranger soul?" This thought terrified me and I screamed. A woman in passing halted at my cot and with kindly eyes looked down upon me. I could not recollect having seen such a face. It possessed not a mark of beauty

in the physical sense and yet it was radiant with a beauty that proclaimed the triumph of soul. I requested her to sit down for a moment and she did. In a pleasant and soothing voice she began to talk to me. At first I paid no heed to the meaning of her words; I was lulled by the music in them. But after a time the significance of her thought came into my mind. I strove to repeat what she said but could not. There was no mysticism, nothing vague—a strange new wisdom, though, and wisdom was foreign to my nature and my mind. But it was pleasing to listen and I begged her to continue. She was in no haste to leave me. She smiled upon my suffering, but in her smile there was beautious sympathy. She did not ask me for my confidence, yet I told her my story, expecting to see her countenance change, but it did not, except to grow sweeter with patience and compassion. "And oh, that I might ask one favor of you," I said. "Soon I am to die—and will you sit near me, to cheer me at the last awful moment, to keep that hag from me?"

She smiled. "There is no hag and there must not be an awful moment."

"Oh, you mean that you will soothe the moment and take from it the terror of death?"

"There must not be death. You are in the thrall of mortal mind. The Real Mind cannot be ill—cannot suffer. There is no evil. All is good—all that is. That which you think the substance of disease is but a vision of evil. What is the substance of the tree? Is it the bark or the branches or the roots? These may be burned and the ashes scattered, but the spirit that caused the leaves to come out—*that* cannot be destroyed. You might cut down all the trees and there would remain just as much of that something that caused the tree to grow. Mortal hands cannot reach it. It flows from the spirit of nature—the one mind, good—God. You live by the spirit and not by the flesh, but the spirit may control the flesh, this outward garment. There is one great and omnipotent Mind—the Eternal. All mind is a part of that one eternal mind. There are countless millions of drops of water, but all of the drops combined compose water, the sea. You must not pass on now. In this present form of life there is work for you to do. You have not yet lived. Your existence has been a

struggle with mortal mind. Your freedom is registered—was registered by Christ, the Scientist. You have only to accept Him, not as a mere name, but as a reality. He is the great healer of all ills. The soul—divine mind—is the only substance. All else are but shadows. They pass away. The sun will burn out. The rocks wear into dust and be blown about,—but the Mind, the only substance, remains forever. It was here before the sun, before the air. It will always remain. You are a part of that mind. Why then should you, part of the eternal mind, suffer? You cannot. It is mortal mind that suffers in you. You must not think that your own will is a physician. Your will is a part of mortal mind and may soon fall into weakness and disease. Accept the truth—that Christ, the Scientist, is health, strength and happiness. The physicians have told you that you must die. They believe in their own theory. They have been educated. But how far toward the understanding of the real man has their education helped them? They may dissect a man—the most skillful of them—and cannot determine whether this man were honest or a thief, brave or a coward,

industrious or lazy. So, then, the most important part of this man—the something that made him whatever he might have been, has wholly escaped them. They cannot administer upon the something that holds you alive at this moment."

"You cannot mean that there is any hope for me," I replied; and she smiled as she said: "There is not only a hope but a certainty. What difference can it make with the eternal mind how far the disease of mortal mind has progressed? Your cure was effected more than ages ago. All truth is eternal. No historian can go back to the foundation of truth. Principles are more ancient than the hills. There is a part of you which cannot die. It is the essential part, for it is a part of the great and eternal whole. That part can dominate the physical part."

"But I cannot exert my mind," I feebly replied.

"I do not mean that you should, for that part which you of yourself could assert would be the mortal part. This would do you no good. But you can accept the truth. You may open the ears of your understanding. You have come to believe that you need a certain drug. You feel

that without it you will be wretched. That is the cry of your mortal self. But we do not live by mortal self. Realize that you are immortal—that you are a part of the eternal mind. Do not believe in that old error that you have within your body a soul to be tortured. You yourself are soul—that part of you which is substance, and substance cannot be effected by medicine."

Suddenly I realized the truth of what she was saying. I had been held in a thrall, a slavery of the mortal flesh. There could be but one supreme power—Good. Evil had no place in the great economy. I rose up with a new strength and sat on the edge of the cot. I felt that within me a new force was at work. New force? Ah, it was the old force, the eternal force. We talked until a late hour. Then the woman bade me good night, saying that she would come again on the following day. I lay down and slept. I did not even dream. In the rebuilding of wasted forces nature did not disturb herself. The careless nurse was astonished. She was determined, however, that I should not draw too much of encouragement from my peaceful and recuperative night. She said that it sometimes happened

that way—just before the end. I had been assigned to die, and it seemed that to live was a violation of instructions. I wished to dress myself but she forbade it.

It was still early when the woman came. She brought with her a book, Science and Health. "Read this today and tomorrow I will come for you," she said. Now there was no doubt. I knew that she would come for me and that I should be able to go with her. She expressed no surprise over the great progress I had made during the night. "Do not be afraid of eating," she said. Then I realized that I was hungry. As I was doomed to die, it made no difference as to what I might eat, so they brought me a substantial meal. How delicious everything tasted. It was as if the appetite of early youth had returned. Morphine! It did not exist—for me. This woman, this agent from the Eternal, told me that her name was Martha Haines. Many years of her life had been devoted to Science. She had arisen from a death bed. Now she was again in the youth of her health and her strength.

She did not remain long this time, having many other duties, but left me to read the book.

At first it was not clear to me. It seemed that a great soul was struggling to express itself in the hampering language of the body. Over the landscape there appeared to be clouds; but after a while the sun shone through. And now all was clear. The day passed in perfect peace. My mind was growing every moment, but in its evolution it did not look back or brood upon the past. I believed, however, that remorse must come when full development should be attained.

In the evening one of the doctors who had pronounced my case incurable passed along where I was sitting, in a chair near the cot. He halted and looked at me. "Is it possible," he said. "Why, you look like a little girl. Your face is as bright as a Christmas doll's."

He was kindly and I tried to tell him something of the cause that had wrought the great change. But I couldn't. He listened patiently and then remarked: "Ah, there are a great many things that none of us can comprehend."

When Martha Haines came the next morning I was walking about, waiting for her. She was in no wise astonished. "Ah," she said, "you look as if the night had been balmy."

"An unconscious delight," I answered and she laughed. Then I asked her if she thought me able to leave the hospital. How evil does cling unto itself. She answered my question by telling me to get my hat. And so, I went forth into the sunshine, into the new and joyous world. How clear everything was. My illness had vanished as a fog of the night, and with it, all my evil desires had flown. Back upon my former self I looked and saw disease—moral evil from which I now was forever cured and set free. My heart was overflowing with a great and universal love. Within me there was no vestige of bitterness, and I regretted my former self as one would regret a disease during which time and opportunity had been wasted. It had been but a dream and I had not been able to realize that it was a dream, made up of dark shadows. Now my life was real. The very sunshine was different. It was a part of *me*—of my mind, my being. Not one unhealthful emotion stirred within me. I was a part of a great calm. I realized that no evil could endure. In my heart Edward held no more of a place than mankind in general. I knew that it was but my mortal mind

that had fancied a love for him, and that such love was an evil which could not endure. I was cured of him. I thought of Bayless and toward him I felt nothing but kindness. The only longing I had was a desire to make the whole of man see the world as now I saw it—full of good with evil passing away.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SOLUTION OF ALL TROUBLESOME PROBLEMS.

Mrs. Haines lived in a quiet street off from Grand Boulevard, a Place, they called it. The house, large and old fashioned, was steep-gabled, the lower half of brick and the upper half of wood. From without it looked like the abode of assured rest, and when one had crossed the threshold, this impression became a conviction. Everywhere there was comfort, the furniture smiling in good humor, the pictures all of them kindly; and as I looked about I knew that at last I had found the calm waters of the harbor of contentment. My hostess spoke no unnecessary words of welcome. Her manner was the *grace* of welcome. "Now you are at home," she said.

My room, at the top of the house, commanded a clear view out upon the bustling life of the sons of men. The inner life was provided for with books, many of them old, eloquent and impassioned errors of the ancients. I sat down to

think, not to muse as to what was to become of me. I knew that my life would now shape itself or graciously be shaped; I had no fear of coming evil, and therefore no evil would come. To fear is to invite. To dread is to weaken oneself and to build up calamity. In the sudden possession of new health I was dazzled, more or less, and I could but regard it all in the divine light of a miracle, and it was while in prayful gratitude I was dwelling upon it that Mrs. Haines came up to tell me that luncheon was ready. I spoke my mind to her; I took her hands, looked dim-eyed into her eyes.

"Oh, not a miracle," she said, smiling. "It was Science, the application of truth—and all truth and all good must be divine. It was no special intervention. It was the action of a principle."

"But isn't it a miracle, then, that you should have found me and taken such an interest in me? Why should you have brought me, a stranger, to your home?"

"My dear," she said, "in science there are no strangers. Come, I want you to meet Mr. Haines."

Her husband was sitting at the table, waiting for us. My first sight of him bade me an additional welcome. He was a small, quick man, graceful, and each gesture seemed as an act of kindness. Arising, he gave my hand a warm grasp, and began at once to talk about the beauty of the day, of the cloud-sketches that had hung over the lake, early in the morning. I knew that he must be in some sort of business, but it is not usual for a Chicago business man to find cloud-sketches. Was he an artist? No, he was connected with a school-book concern. His earlier life, in New England, had been devoted to the Unitarian ministry. "It was then that I formed the habit of finding pictures," he said. "I looked into the sky, searching for the eternal. It was before I knew the truth—that we find the eternal by looking within."

I wondered whether he had seen my scandal in the newspapers, but soon I was made to understand that I had been created anew, that my old mortal error life had passed away, and that no scandal could enter into the life which I had now begun to live.

No sand grains of world gossip drifted into

our talk at the table. We talked of science, and I soon found that instead of being a narrow creed, hemmed in by the fear of truth, it was a boundless universe, holding all truth.

"What an error poverty is," said Mr. Haines. "It is a degenerate thought materialized or rather made manifest to the physical eye. When the truth shall have been universally accepted and applied, there can be no poverty. Until then there can be no complete civilization. So long as there is a needy person within its borders, no government can be a complete success. All sociology is an experiment. In Science is the real brotherhood of man. Science would right all of the evils of the ballot box, would settle all troublesome questions. Resolutions passed by legislatures do not change human nature. But Science makes human nature just. Why? Because Science is the light of justice and of truth. Science would settle all questions of race and combative denomination. Take the evil known as the social evil. What have the churches and reformers done with it? What have they to offer except advice? They say, 'come, be good.' But what reward in this world do they offer? None. Hun-

dreds of women have been taken out of the slums, it is true, but they drift back because no other life is open for them. Determined morality of itself cannot wipe away that mark of sin—world disease. At best the poor creatures are looked upon with tolerant pity, and this in time would become an offense to any human being. The church says, 'come into our flock and be saved, ye fallen sister,' but when the sister has come she finds that it was only the outward door that has been opened for her. Evil has left its brand upon her brow; and while the father of the family prays with her and acknowledges that God has forgiven her sins, yet he is not willing that his wife and his daughter should associate with her, fearing that regeneration may not have been complete. This has been discussed thousands of times, in the pulpit and in all sorts of moral print, but no real remedy has been brought forward—or rather no remedy was hit upon until Science held out the hand of true fellowship, of sympathy and of love—the pure hand that cannot be contaminated. If from a bed of what is known as typhoid fever a woman arises, the church does not hold her fever against her. It says, 'you are

cured.' Science lifts a poor creature from the fever of mortal error and recognizes the cure. And here is another trouble encountered by the creed churches: Reclaimed women, and reclaimed men as well, do not appear to be fitted for any sort of congenial work. But can Science overcome this difficulty? It does. Science dignifies and ennobles any sort of honest employment. It endows one with that great virtue, thankfulness for ability to work, to live, to feel, to enjoy the strength of Eternal Mind. Out of this thankfulness grows a constantly increasing improvement. Patience becomes tact, tact develops into talent—and talent is rewarded. The heads of all the great corporations will tell you that their most efficient employes are Scientists. One reason is that being healthier they are always fit for work. Another reason is their absolute honesty. A Scientist cannot afford to deceive himself. He knows that he cannot be dishonest, mumble a few words on his knees and receive forgiveness. Error must be cured. It is not forgiven. Not long ago I heard a banker, in speaking of a young man, say that he had come with the highest possible recommendation

—that he was a Christian Scientist. Ah, and the beauty and the glory of Science is that you are not promised a vague, shadow life remote in the uncertain hereafter. Your life is now—never to end. Your present visible form may pass on, but you do not die, to sleep for ages and then to arise. Taken as a philosophy there is none to compare with it. It is light—cheerfulness, success. It is at once the brother and the sister of Nature; it heals error; it is, as I said, the truth of the world. You may think that your own case is remarkable, but it is not more so than if you had been convinced without having been healed of disease."

I felt that what he said was the truth. My heart murmured it—I breathed it with the air.

"The day of your usefulness has just dawned," he continued; and his wife sat listening as if he were playing an instrument of sweetest music. "Your dark dream has passed. You are entering upon an existence of rhythmic harmony. The wise know that will is merely local, that thought is universal. Will may be exercised as often in the direction of evil as of good, but thought, coming from the Universal Mind,

cannot lead to evil, for as it advances, good arises, on and on without end, so that eventually there must be no evil. Ah," he broke off, "I see that you are still clinging to some of the precautions of the past. You are hungry and yet you fear to eat. You must fear nothing. One of these days you will be brought to realize that there is no force, no power in matter over spirit. What you have been taught to believe is indestructable matter does not really exist at all. A part of it is always passing away—a stone or a piece of iron; and if it can pass, it never has existed. It is an illusion. Matter having no life can have no sensation. How often the short-sighted say, 'Oh, but if I hold my finger in a flame I shall suffer pain.' Now let us see if this finger suffers. 'It does,' declares the materialist. 'The fire communicates with a nerve and the nerve telegraphs to the brain and then we experience sensation.' But how much of sensation has the brain? If it be the seat of all sensation it must be charged with tenfold sensitiveness. This, however, is not true. A large part of the brain may be removed with no great suffering. Of itself it has no sensation. Then the

source of sensation must lie somewhere behind the brain. What is behind the brain? The mind? Let the anatomist find it. In this latter day Mrs. Eddy is a greater discoverer than Columbus. She rediscovered the almost lost world of truth. In his day Plato came near a great discovery. But his day was too early, for the revelation of the truth—the earth sojourn of Christ—had not taken place. Christ accented the truth of God's Science. He and His disciples did not preach sickness but health. Faith was supreme. But man, struggling for material wealth, fell back into the evil of mortal mind. And then for ages the truth seemed to sleep. Men preached in the name of Christ but could not quite forgive. They did not seem able to emancipate themselves, to reapply the principles once made so manifest by the Great and True Scientist. But now there is a revival. The sun so long obscured has come out again, clear in the heavens. Men have begun again to love one another. And, as this love grows—when Science shall have been spread abroad throughout the world, nowhere can there be war, famine or pestilence."

He talked for a long time and eagerly my mind

grasped his words; and when he was done, I went out into the glorious air of the world of God. As yet not thoroughly acquainted with my regeneration, I sometimes caught myself wondering if this were the same existence in which I had suffered so much—in which my earth passions had so weakened and debased me. But it was true, all of this great and merciful change, and in my heart there was a prayer, a sweet chant, and the music of it seemed to fill the world. Hitherto the moments which I had fancied were happy were hysterical, beset with unhealthful emotions, but now my joy was quiet, like an unwavering, an undazzling light.

CHAPTER XXXV.

NO DREAD—NO FEAR.

The next day was Sunday and we went to church—Mr. Haines, Mrs. Haines and I; and it was with a new and sweetly quiet emotion that I entered the great hall and looked about me. Surely I had never before seen so many happy countenances—gold, refined of all dross. The place was full to overflowing, and there were no outbursts of impassioned speech to grapple attention—but there were words deep with the meaning of truth, music, and what was sweeter than all music, the silent prayer of that multitude. Every one was here for a purpose. Every one had accomplished something. No one was engaged in the world-man's endless task, the rolling of the Sysiphean rock of fevered life. Every face was bright with purity and a clear aim. And what a reunion when the services had been concluded! It was as the early following of Christ must have been, each one thankful to meet the

other. It was a family of brothers and sisters, not waiting for formal introduction but divining one another at sight. I shook hundreds of hands, it appeared to me, and I was thankfully conscious that any eye could see in my countenance the unmistakable message of redemption. I was not moved to say, "I am one of you." They all of them knew, saw, felt that I had been healed and regenerated by Science. In even the country where people are most sociable the church has set itself to cool and formal ways, the preacher himself an example of restraint. Neighbors meet of a Sunday, utter a few stilted and meaningless words and separate without a warming throb. But how different here among these Scientists, these children of the truth. Surely they have brought back the manner-charm of a former age.

The day was aglow. Strengthening breezes blew from the lake. We decided to walk home. Just as we reached the street a young man came toward us. He shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Haines, and then with delightful frankness he held out his hand to me; and so, we were ac-

quainted even before Mrs. Haines introduced him—Herbert Carroll.

"I am going home with you," he said to my hostess.

"You are always welcome, Herbert," she replied.

"Thank you. And I am going to walk with our new sister," he said.

"How do you know I am a new sister?" I asked, walking along with him. "Has any one told you?"

"Oh, it was not necessary to be told. I could see that your habiliments were freshly made and that you wore them with the grace and the charm of novelty."

"Elinor," said Mrs. Haines, looking back, "you must expect such talk from our friend. He has not been long out of the University of Chicago."

"And had it not been for her, Miss Dawson," said he, "my degree would have been on stone rather than sheep-skin. When all others had given me up she came with the light and the truth."

"Then we are brother and sister," I made re-

ply. "I had also been given up. Mortal effort declared its weakness and put me on a cot to die."

He took my hand, this stranger—this brother, and for a time we walked along as two children, coming home from school—in silence, and in that silence two spirits flew across the world and tipped each other with their wings—flew across a thousand years, through thunder clouds and over oceans gnarled with storms, out into the sunshine and the blessed calm of a God-favored day.

When he spoke again his voice was softer as if a strain of music had become so low as to whisper that it was not quite silence. "I knew when I looked at you, as you came up the aisle from your silent prayer," he said—"I knew that your spirit had just drunk of the dews of the morning."

"Ah," I replied, "but when I have told you of the black night you—you—"

Again he touched my hand—touched me to silence. "When the sun has arisen, the black night has never existed," he said.

How generous and how frank were his words.

The night was gone forever, had been a vision, and with him I would believe that it had not existed. I had found it an evil and it had vanished. It was but a shadow, and all shadows must pass away.

I asked him to tell me of his cure, of the time when the light like a golden lamp had been brought to him, and looking up I caught his radiant smile. "In a game of foot-ball I had received what they called a mortal hurt," he said. "For days I was unconscious; and to regain consciousness was to be racked with misery so blighting as to drive me again into mental nothingness. My only hope was not to exist at all. I have no parents and my uncle who was my guardian was educating me. He was tied hand and foot, by creed, of the church and of the medical school, being himself a physician. But his wife had, through reason rather than by the healing of disease, embraced Christian Science. While in the East she had seen Mrs. Eddy and had talked with her; so, when all of the old methods and many that were thought to be new had failed, she requested Mrs. Haines to visit me. You know the rest. No, not all. Before receiv-

ing the hurt I was inconsiderate, wild you might say. In life I saw no object except to follow the lines which I believed must lead to enjoyment. I frequently drank to excess, and gambling held for me a devouring fascination. But when I was healed, the evils of drink and gambling did not exist."

"You are indeed my brother," I said, and now I took his hand and as before we walked along in silence.

How short the distance seemed and how strong I felt when we reached home. Ah, it was a home, and how few there are in this great muddle of selfish men and idle, aimless women. In the parlor we had music—rest; and at the dining table we talked Science, that never old subject.

"Our little sister is going to write," said Mr. Haines. "She smiles at the idea, but you observe that she doesn't frown at it. Yes, she is going to write the story of her life, telling the truth at all times, in the hope that it may do good. She is going to give every phase of her mortal mind, so that others groping along the brambly path may take heart."

"But I must do some work first," I replied. "I have a trade."

"Yes, you must work," he rejoined, "but it must be the work for which you are best fitted —the work that will benefit the world the most; and so, tomorrow or the day afterward, you are going to write a short story for a magazine or perhaps for a school book. And mind you, it will be paid for. Now don't say that you have had no training. To have felt is the greatest of all training. My wife says that you are destined to write and we must not dispute her word."

Mrs. Haines reached over and gently placed her hand on mine. "Work when you feel disposed, my dear," she said. "But don't think that you are compelled to work in order to discharge any obligation you may feel toward me. I know that you will do exactly what is right."

"And," Herbert Carroll remarked, "you will find that every one of your faculties has been brightened and strengthened. Yesterday I met an old man who for many years had been a buyer for a wholesale clothing house. But a few months ago he was told that he had lived beyond the time of serviceable judgment, and conse-

quently, while not actually dismissed, he was reduced to a position of mere drudgery. To look with complacency upon the eternal loss of usefulness requires more of philosophy than is possessed by the most of men. It is harder than to resign oneself to actual death. And so, this man decided that it was better for him to die. He made an unsuccessful attempt upon his life. It was then that Science found him. And now? He has been reinstated, not as a propitiation but because his usefulness has returned. Ah, there is not only a fountain of health but of youth. It is Science."

How earnest he was, and how handsome, his dark eyes aglow; and as I looked upon him I thought that surely he was superior to any man I had ever known. He was strong, an athlete, and withal a man of thought, modestly spoken —and with the spirit of good humor making play-ground of his countenance. It was a quiet and a refined delight to study him, to note the inflections of his voice and the illustrative graces of his manner. His education had been so thorough as now to pass into the unconsciousness of strength. He knew so well the force of words

that for the most part he talked in " simples," and never with the studied repression, the modifying " paleness," breathed out upon the air of so many of the great universities. Upon him he bore the mark of no profession, which Johnson thought was the true test of a perfect gentleman, and I was for once constrained to believe Johnson right, this blunt-sighted definer, this hippopotamus of literature; but I knew that Carroll was not afraid of a mark, of the pick, the shovel—that he would do day labor rather than to be a useless walker on the busy earth. Between him and me there were none of the restraints of forced modesty. And why should there have been? Had not our spirits flown across the ancient skies and touched wings in today's empyrean? Had he come to me as a reward for all that I had falsely suffered? No, for why should the false be rewarded? He had come simply as the truth, as a kinsman of the heart, and even his regard was more of worth than all of the earth-love that had ever been vowed for me. He asked me if I should like to go out for a walk, and he saw my answer before I had uttered it.

" Had Mrs. Haines told you nothing of me? "

I asked of him as we walked along beneath the trees.

"Nothing whatever," he answered. "And when I had seen you, there was naught to tell. We might listen to a lecture on a star, but the star does not exist for us until we have looked upon it—until with our eyes we have drunk its rays."

I did not know how to reply to him, but I felt that indeed there was much more to tell. He was a man, on earth, and his interest in me entitled him to my story, if the time now in the bud should ripen; but I dreaded it, that sad ripening. And then something seemed to whisper: "There must be no dread, no fear."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE.

On the following day I went with Mrs. Haines to visit some of her charges. I shall not forget one, a woman, employed as house-keeper in a prosperous family. For a time I was left alone with this woman, and with a cheerfulness which too many women have forgotten or have never acquired, she began to talk of her newly awakened ambition, which was, to be of use in the world. "I didn't begin to live the true life until a few months ago," she said. "Mrs. Haines came to me in an hour that was dark and in a place that was darker. Years ago my life was given over to error. I lived in offense of all morality—on the bread of vice, and was decked out with the glitters of what the world knows as the vilest sin. You know what I mean."

"It is plain enough, and I am not here to cast the first stone," I replied.

She smiled, and in the light radiated from her own countenance, she was handsome.

"I could not look forward to an escape from that life," she said. "I was not ignorant, having been fairly well schooled in the country, but the mark of the evil life was upon me, and there appeared to be nothing that could wash away the stain. Whenever the reformers persuaded a girl to leave our abode we knew that she would soon come back again, for you must understand that the avowed gospel of the churches has never been able to compel society to accept the once fallen woman."

"Society does not weigh causes," said I. "The gospel weighs and estimates, and prescribes a cure—the right gospel, but it is not the gospel of studied declamation, of preachers dignified out of all tenderness and love."

"That is true," she assented. "But as I was saying, we all knew that the reformed one would find her way back to us, with a sneer on her lip. We knew that she would be driven back, with bitterness in her heart and contempt in her laughter—the laughter of final despair. We knew all of this, but we knew nothing of the

real cure. But one day a girl left us and—she came back, it is true, not to live with us again but to bring the message of a wonderful discovery. Her face, her beaming spirit showed that there had been a miraculous change. Her heart was light and a gentle love for all humanity shone from her eyes. I was ill at the time; the doctors said that I had consumption. It was all I could do to breathe. 'Oh, but you will soon be well,' she said to me. 'You must know that disease is an evil and that in truth there is no evil. Good does not wish that evil should exist. And now, I am going to bring some one to see you.' She did. Mrs. Haines came the next day. It would be unnatural to suppose that I had very much faith. I hadn't—but I liked to hear Mrs. Haines talk. Consumptives usually believe they are going to get well. But not so with consumptives in a house of that sort. There, under the constant lash of conscience, all disease seems mortal. But it was not long before I could walk about—and breathe, ah, breathe. And within a month I was healed. I came out of that place not hating it but pitying it—came out into the new world, not afraid of society, of women, for

I knew that when truth should see me, truth would know that I had been cured and was sound. And when I went to the church of Christ, Scientist, there was the warm, welcoming hand, the kindly eye; and in that silent prayer I thanked God that I was alive and of use in this great world. Ah, and nearly all of the inmates of that house have come forth into the world of usefulness and purity. The other day I met one, the handsomest but the most ignorant one among us; and she told me that she was scrubbing floors, thanking God for her happiness."

Mrs. Haines and the mistress of the house, an old but bright woman, came into the room. "Ah, Miss Evans has been telling you something," said Mrs. Haines.

"Yes," I replied, "she *has*—she has told me of the solving of a problem that the philosophers and the great moral statesmen have tried in vain to solve—the problem of the social evil."

"It is a dark spot that will pass away when the sun of universal truth shall have thrown its beams into forgotten corners," Mrs. Haines rejoined. "My husband, as you know, believes

that Science will eventually settle all troublesome questions."

"And best of all," said the mistress of the house, laughing, "it has smoothed out the wrinkles of old age. Five years ago my husband and I awoke to the truth that we had not passed beyond the days of our usefulness; and since then we have been happier than ever before. The Bible and Science and Health have been our constant companions."

When we had gone forth from the house I said to Mrs. Haines: "My vision is constantly broadening; and when I sit down to write, as Mr. Haines has suggested, I shall feel that I am to help some one. And, as he also remarked, I am going to give every phase and every whim of my mortal mind, thereby hoping to steal into every woman's mood, and to make a confidant of every heart."

We went to a number of places, finding contentment and brightness everywhere. Ah, how different was this new, this real world, from the midnight dream-world that I had known, in which I had suffered so much. And yet, here were the same streets, the same buildings, the

same people, the most of them racing for something never to be caught—the happiness of mere matter.

On our way home we talked of many things, all bearing upon Science, as all things of real worth must bear upon it; and several times my companion spoke of Herbert Carroll; and over my being there flowed successive waves of quiet pleasure—waves of warming light, they were, lifting my mind into a serener view of life and of truth. Garbed in the raiment of modern flesh we had met but once, it was true, but if we cannot point to the end of mind association, who can go back beyond the beginning?

That night, alone in my room, near the window with the stars looking in upon me, I wrote to my mother. With the truth my pen made free use, as it is doing at this moment as I write to you, troubled brother, dark-souled sister; and no error of my own escaped from under a just and proper emphasis. But I told her, and with the strength that does not fear to be happy lest it be a deception—told her of my new birth into the real world. "I have just begun to live," I said, as all of us say, "and I find life full of kind-

liness, sweetness and love. 'Oh, for the ideal life,' sighed one in the ancient day, bowing his aged head upon his books, the work of his brain; but he passed on, without having found the true life, as have passed thousands of others whom the world looked upon as great. They lived upon the verge of blessed truth without having embraced it. Then why should not I rejoice that I live now, in this day of love—this never ending, eternal day! Christ points out the way to health. To many did he say, 'be thou well,' but to none, 'be thou sick.' Out of the sepulchre he called forth Lazarus, and out of the tomb of moral disease he called a woman. When from darkness we come suddenly forth into the light of the sun we are dazzled; and so, as the light is as yet comparatively new to me, I am not prepared to explain it. I should have termed my recovery from disease and the slavery of opium as a miracle. In the olden day it would have been deemed such, but now it is known as a natural visitation, the application not of a new but of an eternal principle. And as such I must accept it."

Early the next morning I began to write, and it seemed that for the first time all of my facul-

ties, memory, judgment of self, came into full being. The years were as yesterdays, clear in immediate view, and through them I could trace my emotions. But at no time did I neglect my study. Science, as a great principle; requires not only faith, which makes one confident, but research, which renders one wise.

In the evening Herbert Carroll came. With him he brought the brightness and the broad-spreading strength of the new world. Hitherto there might have bloomed a flower, a sudden and unexpected thought, but here was a whole forest of verdure and of blossom. Sitting near the window in the soft air, in the light of the shaded lamp, he told me of his former life, of what he had believed, of the errors through which he had passed. "With Hartman in his Philosophy of the Unconscious," said he, "I believed that creation was a mistake of the Wise One, if there were a Wise One, and that its constant sorrow was but a groan over the lamentable fact that it was an error—that our disappointments were the reflection of a repentance on the part of the Creator. Death was better than life for death was not an ephemeral trouble but an eternal non-

existence. Taking council with Annikeris, I could believe that our only hope was for the extirpation of hope. Reason taught that epicurism must end in misery. To be was to be wrong. Pain was a threat of the only reality, being a foretaste of death, the eternal condition. And as death must come, I was determined to get as much as possible out of life; and, seeking to get much, I got nothing. I did not know that man must be a part of the grand harmony of the universe. I could not conceive that this was not essentially a world of sorrow. The ancients had declared it and modern man had kept up the echo. The greatest of all poets shed the luster of a truth when he said that there was nothing good or evil but that thinking made it so. Common sense—which is the meditative genius of after thought—might have proved to me that in this life thinking is everything *that is*. But it did not. I was not prepared to think. The day had not arrived. All physical power—the rushing of a railway engine, is but the expression of a thought. And if so, how could that mighty thought lie within the narrow cell of a mere brain?

The hours died away, as music dies into sweet silence. He did not speak a word of love, but love was in his eyes and his voice; and when he was gone I felt that never before had I known the meaning of companionship—of affection.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CONCLUSION.

With the morrow there came a letter from my mother. To her and to Samuel the light had come. "For the first time in my life I am strong and contented," she wrote. "My letters to you had remained unanswered and I thought that you must have gone abroad again, but still I could not understand why you had not written to me. One evening a neighbor came over with a newspaper, and then my humiliation and my sorrow almost smothered me. I begged him to let none of the neighbors see it and he promised. And it was kept dark from them. Still I was miserable for I did not know what had become of you. You know what I must have feared. I prayed at church, but no comfort came. The truth was that I didn't know how to pray. It was while I was longing for release from this world of rusty chains that Samuel, who had been at Wheeling, came home with a message. About it there was

nothing fanatical, for you know that he is a man of rare good sense. He told me of a meeting which he had attended and of the thoughts that had come into his life. Soon afterward I went with him. We gathered up all the literature we could get on the subject—we went again to the meeting; and then the truth dawned. And now, we are not only happy but prosperous. Weakness and indecision are diseases and we have been cured of them. Vanity is a disease and I have been healed of it. I long to see you again, for I know you now. I know myself, which is more, and I know the truth which is the most of all."

* * * * *

It is midnight and Herbert has just left me. In the heavens the stars are aglow and in my heart the moon has arisen. We were sitting on the sofa. He took my hands and from his eloquent heart the words of pure and undefiled love flowed forth, to enrapture me—to fill my being with happiness.

"But you must know my sad story," I said to him when he had asked me to be his wife.

"I have not asked for your story but for your love," he answered, kissing me.

"It is but just that I should tell you."

"But who am I to receive confessions?" he said. "It is I, rather, who ought to confess to you."

"I know that you are generous—but I owe it to myself to tell you," said I, and I told him, and about me he put his arms, and all the world was filled with melody. And now it is midnight and I am looking at the stars. In my heart his words are echoing. Within a few days we shall go to my old home, to play in the sunshine that falls upon the slope of the hill. And then we shall go to our new home, to work together, and to live.

THE END.

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